

ADVENT

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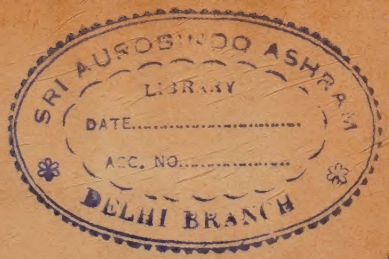
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*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



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The Advent

The Mother demands that men shall arise to institute her worship and make it universal.

She demands worship not for Her own sake, but in order that She may help us and give Herself to us.

SRI AUROBINDO
(*Bhawani Mandir, 1905*)

The ADVENT

NOVEMBER, 1955

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Timidity is a form of vanity. When you are timid, it means that you attach more importance to the opinion others have of you than to the sincerity of your action.

THE MOTHER



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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS

ORGANISE YOUR LIFE

MORAL notions have nothing to do with the growth of the inner being. I regret to say it, but the two are ill-assorted mates and go opposite ways. You may fall totally sick by doing a very unselfish act, on the other hand you may continue to be hale and hearty while doing the most egoistic acts.

There is a great difference between a moral consciousness and a consciousness that is the expression of truth. I tell you again it is infinitely more difficult to have a consciousness expressing the truth than to have a moral consciousness. For any blockhead who knows social rules and follows them has a moral consciousness, but to have a consciousness of the truth, one must not be a blockhead, that is the first condition.

All the misadventures of life come from a lack of organisation of life. You live from moment to moment, take things as they arrive, somehow or other. Or, you try a mental organisation which does not at all agree with the truth and is therefore thwarted at each step. But if life is organised according to a higher principle, without the gropings that usually attend it,

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that is to say, following every minute a precise indication with regard what is to be done and how it is to be done, then things can be arranged without mishaps.

Generally speaking, it is better to choose one's work carefully, take only as much as one is able to do and do that well; often you take up much and in that too much there are a good amount of useless things which can be cut out or diminished considerably without affecting the result. I do not make this an absolute general rule. I am stating only an experience of mine. If you are all attention to the inner indication and you refuse to be pushed about by the waves coming from outside—movements of other people's will, routine circumstances or adverse forces that do not want things to be done—I say, instead of being driven hither and thither, you receive the clear precise inner sign and follow it without evading or hesitating, with a strictness even that may be displeasing to others—much the worse for the others—in that case you find that you do become some sort master of circumstances, they organise themselves favourable and you are able to do more work in less time.

There is a way of diminishing the time taken for a work and that is increasing your concentration. There are people incapable of concentration it tires them. But it is like carrying a weight; you can get used to it. So first you have to master this power of concentration; for that you have to calm your mind and in that calmness, concentrate, go on concentrating on the point that you have to deal with, on the work that is to be done, whatever it is. The concentration comes with a kind of driving force, quiet but extremely powerful; and you go forward without hesitation. Then you can do in a quarter of an hour what might normally take full one hour. That saves you a good deal of time. You can, instead of continually passing from one work to another, stretch yourself for a while and have complete rest. The rest gives you relaxation to all the limbs that were under tension while you were working, that is to say, brings new strength to them and you can start again another spell of concentration.

13-4-1955

THE SURRENDER OF AN INNER WARRIOR

It means the vital when it is converted. The converted vital is for the Divine like a warrior. The vital in man is the region of power and it is the

EDITORIALS

which drives him to fight, to fight and conquer. It is the most difficult element to deal with: for it is this capacity to fight that also produces in the vital the spirit of revolt and independence, the will to follow its own will. But when the vital understands and is converted, if it is truly surrendered to the Divine Will, then his fighting capacity turns against anti-divine forces, the forces of obscurity that prevent the transformation: the powers of the vital are strong enough to conquer the enemies. The anti-divine forces are in the vital world: from there they spread upon the physical. But their own seat is in the vital and it is the converted vital that can effectively deal with them. But the conversion is difficult.

The higher vital finds it much less difficult to surrender, for it is under the influence of the mind and sometimes even of the psychic; it understands them more easily. It is less difficult than the lower vital, for the latter is essentially the stronghold of desires and blind impulsions. The lower vital, even when it surrenders, when it does what it is asked to do, is not wholly happy, it suffers and only pushes down the impulse to revolt, it obeys unwillingly and does not collaborate. Unless it collaborates in joy and true love, nothing can be done, the transformation cannot come.

The surrender can be happy only when it is sincere. Or rather one can turn round the thing and say, if the vital is not happy, you must know for certain that it is not perfectly sincere. If it is not happy, that means there is some reservation, something that would like the thing to be otherwise, something with a will of its own, its own desire, its own aim and which is not satisfied, not completely surrendered, not sincere in its surrender. But if one is sincere in his surrender one is perfectly happy automatically: one enjoys an inexpressible happiness. Therefore if there is not this inexpressible happiness, it is a sign that something is there which is not sincere.

Now if you wish to discover that part, you have to aspire, to insist, throw the light—pray, if need be. There are many other ways. Sometimes a surgical operation too is necessary, put the red hot iron into the wound, just as you have to do when there is a nasty abscess that does not want to burst.

OPENING TO THE DIVINE

You are to open yourself to the Divine and receive Him. Usually you open yourself in all directions to everything and everybody in the world. You open your surface being and receive there all influences from all quarters.

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So inside you there comes about what we can call a hotch-potch of all contrary and contradictory movements: and that creates difficulties without number. Now instead of that, live away from the surface, from the outside and open up to the Divine and receive nothing but the Divine force. If you can do that, all difficulties practically disappear. But, of course, the trouble is there. Unless one is alchemically conditioned, it is an impossibility to have relations with people, to talk to them, to deal with them, have interchanges with them and yet not absorb something out of them. If one can surround oneself with an atmosphere that acts as a filter, then all that come from outside are checked and sifted before they reach you or touch you. That needs a good training and a large experience. That is why people in ancient days who wanted an easier path took to solitude, into the depths of the forest, on the top of a hill or under a cave so that they might not have to do with people—for that naturally reduces undesirable interchange. Only, it has also been found that such people begin to take an enormous interest in the life of animals and plants instead of men: for it is indeed difficult to do without interchange with something or other. So the best thing would be to face the problem squarely, to clothe yourself with an atmosphere totally concentrated on the Divine so that whatever passes across is filtered in its passage. And further, there is the question of food. The body is obliged to take in foreign matter in order to subsist, it would therefore absorb at the same time a fair quantity of inert and unconscious forces or that of some not very desirable consciousness. I once spoke to you of the consciousness that one absorbs with food, there is also unconsciousness that one absorbs in the same way. That is why in many systems of Yoga you are advised to offer first to the Divine your food and then eat: it means calling down the Divine into your food before absorbing it. Offering means putting in contact: the food is put in contact with the Divine i.e. put under His influence. This is a very good, a very useful procedure; if you know how to do it, it would diminish very much the labour of the inner transformation that one has to do. For in the world we live in solidarity with all others. You can not take in a single breath of air without absorbing the vibrations, the numberless vibrations that come from all kinds of movement and all kinds of people. So if you want to keep yourself intact, you must, as I have said, maintain yourself in the condition of a filter allowing nothing undesirable to enter. Or put on a mask as one does when crossing an infected and poisoned locality, or do something similar.

EDITORIALS

One must have around oneself an atmosphere so condensed, condensed in a spirit of total surrender, that nothing can enter without being automatically filtered. There are wicked thoughts, evil will about you, harmful formations sent out by bad people. The air pullulates with these: dark noisesome bacilli. It is so troublesome to be always on the look out, at every step to be on one's guard, to move slowly with care and cautions and precautions; even then one is not sure. But if you cover yourself with the cloak of light, the light of a happy, sincere surrender, and aspiration, that is a wonderful filter, that gives you automatic protection. The undesirable forces not only cannot enter, they are thrown back upon their originator, the attackers themselves become their own victims.

7-7-1954

ASCETICISM

You have seen Sannyasins lying upon nails. Why do they do that? Perhaps to prove their saintliness. But when they do so in public, well, the suspicion is legitimate that it is something like a pose. There are some perhaps who do the thing sincerely and seriously, that is to say, they do not do merely to make a show. In their case we might ask why they do so. They say it is to prove to themselves their detachment from the body. There are others: they go a little further and say that one must make the body suffer in order to free the soul. But I tell you that the vital has a taste for suffering and imposes suffering on the body because of this perverse taste for suffering. I have seen children who, when they got hurt, would press the part hurt in order to get more pain and it was a pleasure to them. I have seen bigger persons also doing the same thing—morally I mean. It is a very well-known fact. I always tell people 'If you are unhappy, it is because you want to be unhappy. If you suffer, it is because you like suffering, otherwise you would not have the thing.' I call it an unhealthy state; for it is contrary to harmony and beauty; it is a kind of unhealthy need for strong sensations. Do you know, China is a country where they have invented the most atrocious kinds of torture, unthinkable ways? When I was in Japan I asked a Japanese who liked the Chinese very much, why it was so. He told me: 'It is because the people of the Far East, including the Japanese, possess very dull sensibility. They feel very little; unless the suffering is very strong they feel nothing.' They were obliged to use their intelligence for the dis-

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covery of extremely strong sufferings. Well, all people who are inconscient or tamasic, the more inconscient they are the greater the tamas, have their sensibility blunted; they need strong sensations if they have to feel them. This is what usually makes them cruel, because cruelty gives very strong sensations. The nerve tension produced in you when you impose suffering on some one, well, it does bring a sensation: they need that in order to feel, otherwise they would not feel. It is for that reason that whole races are particularly cruel. They are inconscient, inconscient vitally. They may not be unconscious mentally or otherwise. But they are unconscious vitally and physically, physically above all.

If one has a sense of beauty can he be cruel?

It is a psychological problem. It depends upon the region where there is the sense of beauty. There may be a physical sense of beauty, a vital sense of beauty and a mental sense of beauty. If you have the moral sense of beauty, that is to say, a sense of decency and nobility, you can never be cruel. You will be always generous; your movements will consist of fine gestures. But, as I say often, man is composed of many different bits pieced together. For example, I frequented very much the artists. I knew all the great artists of the end of the last century and the beginning of the present. I lived among them. They had really a great sense of beauty. But morally some were very cruel. It is because when you see an artist in his study at work you find him living in an atmosphere of great beauty, but when you see the gentleman at home, he is a different person, having very little contact with the artist he was. Here he becomes vulgar and commonplace. Many of them are indeed like that. But there are always exceptions. Some have a unified personality, that is to say, they live their art and are truly generous, fine.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

MAHABHARATA

(A Translation)

(Continued from last issue)

THE BOOK OF THE ASSEMBLY HALL

THE DEBATED SACRIFICE

“O thou
Art.....¹ wise,” Yudhishtere cries, “Lo now
A word no other heart might soar so high
To utter; yet thy brave sagacity
Plainly hath phrased it; nor like thee on earth
Another loosener of doubts takes birth
(Another sword of counsel shall take birth)
[Behold, the earth is full of kings; they still
Each in his house do absolutely their will;
Yet who attains to empire? Nay, the word
Itself is danger.] He who has preferred
His enemy’s greatness by sad study known,
How shall he late forget and praise his own?
Only who in his foemen’s shock not thrown
Wins by ordeal praise, deserves the crown.
[This vast and plenteous earth, this mine of gems,
Is from a distance judged, how vast its realms,
Not from the dells. Nor otherwise, O pride
Of Vrishny’s seed, man’s greatness is espied.
In calm and sweet content is highest bliss,
Mine be the good that springs from chastened peace.]
Nor I even with this attempt hope the crown

¹ Illegible in MS.

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Of high supremacy to wear. Renown
Girds these high-born minds; and so they deem
Lo I and I am warrior and supreme.
But we by Jarasandha's force alarmed
And all his bold tyrannies iron-armed
Shun the emprise Hero, O high-starred,
In whose great prowess we have done and dared,
In whose heroic arm our safeties dwell
Yet lo thou fearest him, deemst invincible
And where thou fearest, my conceit of strength
Becomes a weakling's dream until at length
I hardly dare to hope by strongest men
This mighty Jarasandha can be slain,
Arjun or Bhima or Rama or combined.
Thou, Keshove, in all things to me art mind".
Out Bhima spoke, the strong man eloquent.
"The unstrenuous king, unhardy, unvigilant
Sinks like an anthill; nor the weak-kneed less
Who on a stranger leans his helplessness.
But the unsleeping and resourceful man
With wide and adequate attempt oft can
His mightier enemy vanquish; him though feeble
His wished-for good attends invariable.
Krishna has policy and I have strength
And with our mother's son Dhananjoy, length
Assured of victory dwells; we shall assail
Victoriously the Magadhan and quell
As triple fire a victim." Krishna then;
"Often we see that rash unthinking men
Imprudent undertake nor consequence
Envisage; yet will not his foe dispense
Therefore the one-ideaed and headstrong man.
Now since the virtuous age first began
Five emperors have reigned to history known,
Maroutta, Bharat, Yuvanaswa's son,
Great Bhagirath and Kartavirya old.
By wealth Maroutta conquered, Bharat bold
By armed strength; Mandhata's victories

MAHABHARATA

Enthroned him and his subtle soul and wise.
By strenuous greatness Cartavirya bent
The world, but Bhagirath beneficent
Gathered the willing nations to his sway.
But thou purposing like greatness, to one way
Not limited, restorest the imperial five
Their various masteries reunited live.
Virtue, high policy, wealth without dearth
And conquest and rapid grasp of earth
Yet avail not to make solely great—
Strong Jarasandha bars thee from thy fate,
(Whom not the hundred nations can deter
But with great might he grown an emperor;
The jewel-sceptred kings to serve him start.
Yet he in his unripe and violent heart)
Unsatisfied, assumes the tyrant's part.
He, the first man of men, lays his rude hand
On the anointed monarchs of the land
And pillages. Not one we see exempt.
How then shall feeblar king his fall attempt?
Well-nigh a hundred in his sway is whelmed.
With these like cattle cleansed, like cattle hemmed
In Sheva's house, the dreadful Lord of beasts
Purified as for sacrificial feasts,
Surely life's joy is turned to bitterness,
Not dying like heroes in the battle's press.
Honour is his who in swift battle falls
And best mid swords high death to princes calls.
In battle let us 'gainst the Magadh thrust,
By battle ignominy repel. To just
Eighty and six the royal victims mount,
Fourteen remain to fill the dire account,
Who being won his horrid violence
No farther pause will brook. (Glory immense
He wins, glory most glorious who frustrates
Interposing the tyrant and amates.
Kings shall acclaim him lord inevitably.")
But Yudhishtere made answer passionately:

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"Shall I, ambitious of imperial place,
Krishna, expose, in my mad selfishness,
Urged upon by naked daring men to death
Whom most I love? O Krishna, what is breath
To one that's mad and of his eyes bereft?
What joy has he that life to him is left?
These are my eyes, Thou Krishna art my mind,
Lo I have come as one who stumbles blind
Upon the trackless Ocean's spuming shore,
Then wakes, so have I all blindly before
Upon this dire.....¹ whom death
Dare not in battle cross, what use is breath²
Of hopeless effort? Mischief only can
Result to the too blindly daring man.
Better not undertaken, is my mind
On riper thought, than fruitlessly designed.
Nay, let us leave this purpose, wiser so
Than with eyes open to our death to go.
For all my heart within is broken and slain
Viewing the vast impracticable pain
Of Sacrifice Imperial." Then replied
To Yudhishthere great Partha in the pride
Of wonders self-attained, banner and car,
And palace Titan-built (and in the war
Quiver made inexhaustible) and great
Unequalled bow. "O King" he said "since Fate
Has given me bow and shafts, a sword like flame,
Great hands and strength, courage, allies and fame,
Yea, such has given as men might covet long
And never win; O King, what more? For strong
Is birth and conquers, cries the theorist
Conversant in deep books; but to my taste
Courage is strongest strength. How helps it them
The uncourageous that heroic men
His fathers were? From uncourageous sires

¹ Illegible in MS.

² Fears in the sounding battle, what use is breath

MAHABHARATA

Who springs a hero, he to glory *towers*.
That man the name of Kshettriya merits best
Whose soul is ever to the battle *drèst*.
Courage, all gifts denied, ploughs through amain
A sea of foes: courage without in vain
All other gifts conspire; rather all gifts
Courage into a double stature lifts.
But conquest is in three great strengths complete—
Action, capacity, fate: where these three meet,
There conquest comes; nor strengths alone suffice;
Men by neglect forfeit their Paradise.
And this the cause the strong much-hated man
Before his enemies sinks. Hard 'tis to scan
Whether of these flaws strength most fatally,
A spirit poor or an o'erweening eye.
Both are destruction. Kings who highly aim
And court success, must either quite disclaim.
And if by Jerasandha's overthrow,
Rescuing Kings, to Sacrifice we go,
What fairer, what more glorious? Mighty prince
Deeds unattempted virtue maimed evince.
In us when virtue dwells, why deemst thou, brother,
A nothingness the children of thy mother.
Easy it is the ochre gown to take
Afterwards, if for holy calmness' sake
We must the hermit virtues imitate.
But here is Empire! here a royal fate!
Let others quietism's sweets embrace;
We the loud battle seek, the foeman's face."
"In Kuntie's son and born of Bharut's race
What spirit should dwell, Arjun's great words express."
Said Krishna, "And of death we have no light
(Whether it comes by day or comes by night,
Nor this of mortal man was ever known
That one by going not to fight has grown
Immortal. Let him then who's man indeed
Clash forth against his foes, yet rule decreed
Of policy forget not: so his mind

THE ADVENT

Shall live at poise. For when in battle combined
Conduct meets long felicity, then high
Success must come nor two met equally
Equal can issue thence: from clash and strife
Of equals inequality takes life.
But rash impolicy with helplessness
Having joined issue in their mutual stress
Breed ruin huge; equality inglorious
Then doubt engenders, nor are both victorious.
Therefore in skilful conduct putting trust
If with our foe we grapple, fell him we must
As a wild torrent wrestling with a tree
Uproots and hurls it downward to the sea.
'Trying the weak points in thine enemy's mail,
Subtly thine own disguise, then prompt assail';
So runs the politic maxim of the wise
And to my mind rings just. If we devise
Secret, yet with no spot of treacherous blame,
To penetrate our foeman's house and limb
Grappling with limb, oh, won infallibly then
Our object is. Often one man of men
Pervades the nations like a soul, whose brow
Glory eternal-seeming wears; so now
This lion lord of men; but yet I deem
Shall that eternal vanish like a dream
In battle slaying him if at the last
By many swords we perish, so 'tis best
We shall by death the happy skies attain
Saving from tyranny our countrymen."

SRI AUROBINDO

THE SUPRAMENTAL YOGA*

ALL Yoga done through the mind alone or through the heart or the will or the vital force or the body ends in some one aspect of the finite and eternal Existence and rests satisfied there, as the mind imagines ever. Not through these alone shall thy Yoga move, but through all these at once and, supremely, through that which is beyond them. And the end of thy Yoga shall be the integrality of thy entrance not into one object, but into all the Infinite, all the Eternal, all the Divine in all its aspects indivisibly unified together.

Whatever is beyond mind and life and body is spirit. But spirit can be spiritualised even on these lower levels, in the spiritualised mind, in the spiritualised life-force, even in the spiritualised physical consciousness and body. But if thou rise not up beyond the mind-level, then in these realisations the spirit must needs be modified by the medium through which thou attainest it, and its supreme truth can only be seized in a reflection, partial even to the widest apparent universality, and the utmost essential integrality will escape thy seizure.

Rise rather into the supramental levels and then all the rest shall remain part of thy experience, but wonderfully changed, transfigured by a supreme chemistry of consciousness into an element of the supramental glory. All that other Yogas can give thee, thou shalt have, but as an experience over-passed, put in its place in the Divine Whole and delivered from the inadequacy of an exclusive state or experience.

*

*

The Supramental Yoga is at once an ascent towards God and a descent from Godhead into the embodied nature.

The ascent can only be achieved by a one-centred all-gathering upward aspiration of the soul and mind and life and body; the descent can only

* Unpublished writing

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come by a call of the whole being towards the infinite and eternal Divine. If this call and this aspiration are there, or if by any means they can be born and grow constantly and seize all the nature, then and then only a supramental uplifting and transformation becomes possible.

The call and the aspiration are only first conditions; there must be along with them and brought by their effective intensity an opening of all the being to the Divine and a total surrender.

This opening is a throwing wide of all the nature on all its levels and in all its parts to receive into itself without limits the greater divine Consciousness which is there already above and behind and englobing this mortal half-conscious existence.

In the receiving there must be no inability to contain, no breaking down of anything in the system, mind or life or nerve or body under the transmuting stress. There must be an endless receptivity, an always increasing capacity to bear an ever stronger and more and more insistent action of the divine Force. Otherwise nothing great or permanent can be done; the Yoga will end in a break-down or an inert stoppage or a stultifying or a disastrous arrest in a process which must be absolute and integral if it is not to be a failure.

But since no human system has this endless receptivity and unfailing capacity, the supramental Yoga can succeed only if the Divine Force, as it descends, increases the personal power and equates the strength that receives with the Force that enters from above to work in the nature. This is only possible if there is on our part a progressive surrender of the being into the hands of the Divine; there must be a complete and never-failing assent, a willingness to let the Divine Power do with us whatever is needed for the work that has to be done.

Man cannot by his own effort make himself more than man; the mental being cannot by his own unaided force change himself into a supramental spirit. A descent of the Divine Nature can alone divinise the human receptacle.

For the powers of our mind, life and body are bound to their own limitations and, however high they may rise or however widely expand, they cannot rise above their natural ultimate limits or expand beyond them. But still, mental man can open to what is beyond him and call down a supramental Light, Truth and Power to work in him and do what the mind cannot do. If mind cannot by effort become what is beyond mind, supermind can descend and transform mind into its own substance.

THE SUPRAMENTAL YOGA

If the Supramental Power is allowed by man's discerning assent and vigilant surrender to act according to its own profound and subtle insight and flexible potency, it will bring about slowly or swiftly a divine transformation of our fallen and imperfect nature.

This descent, this working is not without its possibility of calamitous fall and danger. If the human mind or the vital desire seizes hold on the descending force and tries to use it according to its own limited and erring ideas or flawed and egoistic impulses,—and this is inevitable in some degree until this lower mortal has learned something of the way of that greater immortal nature,—stumbleings and deviations, hard and seemingly insuperable obstacles and wounds and suffering cannot be escaped and even death or utter downfall are not impossible. Only when the conscious integral surrender to the Divine has been learned by mind and life and body, can the way of the Yoga become easy, straight, swift and safe.

And it must be a surrender and an opening to the Divine alone and to no other. For it is possible for an obscure mind or an impure life-force in us to surrender to undivine and hostile forces and even to mistake them for the Divine. There can be no more calamitous error. Therefore our surrender must be no blind and inert passivity to all influences or any influence, but sincere, conscious, vigilant, pointed to the One and the Highest alone.

Self-surrender to the divine and infinite Mother, however difficult, remains our only effective means and our sole abiding refuge,—self-surrender to her means that our nature must be an instrument in her hands, the soul a child in the arms of the Mother.

*

*

This divinisation of the nature of which we speak is a metamorphosis, not a mere growth into some kind of superhumanity, but a change from the falsehood of our ignorant nature into the truth of God-nature. The mental or vital demi-God, the Asura, Rakshasa and Pisacha,—Titan, vital giant and demon,—are superhuman in the pitch and force and movement and in the make of their characteristic nature, but these are not divine and these are not supremely divine, for they live in a greater mind-power or life-power only, but they do not live in the supreme Truth, and only the supreme Truth is divine. Only those who live in a supreme Truth-consciousness and embody it are inwardly made or else remade in the Divine image.

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The aim of supramental Yoga is to change into this supreme Truth-consciousness, but this truth is something beyond mind and this consciousness is far above the highest mind-consciousness. For truth of mind is always relative, uncertain and partial, but this greater Truth is peremptory and whole. Truth of mind is a representation, always an inadequate most often a misleading representation, and even when most accurate, only a reflection, Truth's shadow and not its body. Mind does not live in Truth or only seeks after it and grasps at best some threads from its robe; the Supermind lives in Truth and its native substance, form and expression; it has not to seek after it, but possesses it always automatically and is what it possesses. This is the very heart of the difference.

The change that is effected by the transition from mind to supermind is not only a revolution in knowledge or in our power for knowledge. If it is to be complete and stable, it must be a divine transmutation of our will too, our emotions, our sensations, all our power of life and its forces, in the end even of the very substance and functioning of our body. Then only can it be said that the supermind is there upon earth, rooted in its very earth-substance and embodied in a new race of divinised creatures.

Supermind at its highest reach is the divine Gnosis, the Wisdom-Power-Light-Bliss of God by which the Divine knows and upholds and governs and enjoys the universe.

SRI AUROBINDO

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

I

MEDITATION

YOUR questions cover the whole of a very wide field. It is therefore necessary to reply to them with some brevity, touching only on some principal points.

1. *What meditation exactly means.*

There are two words used in English to express the Indian idea of *Dhyāna*, "meditation" and "contemplation". Meditation means properly the concentration of the mind on a single train of ideas which work out a single subject. Contemplation means regarding mentally a single object, image, idea so that the knowledge about the object, image or idea may arise naturally in the mind by force of the concentration. Both these things are forms of *dhyāna*; for the principle of *dhyāna* is mental concentration whether in thought, vision or knowledge.

There are other forms of *dhyāna*. There is a passage in which Vivekananda advises you to stand back from your thoughts, let them occur in your mind as they will and simply observe them and see what they are. This may be called concentration in self-observation.

This form leads to another, the emptying of all thought out of the mind so as to leave it a sort of pure vigilant blank on which the divine knowledge may come and imprint itself, undisturbed by the inferior thoughts of the ordinary human mind and with the clearness of a writing in white chalk on a blackboard. You will find that the Gita speaks of this rejection of all mental thought as one of the methods of *Yoga* and even the method it seems to prefer. This may be called the *dhyana* of liberation, as it frees the mind from slavery to the mechanical process of thinking and allows it to think or not to think, as it pleases and when it pleases, or to choose its own thoughts or else to go beyond thought to the pure perception of Truth called in our philosophy *Vijñāna*.

Meditation is the easiest process for the human mind, but the narrowest in its results; contemplation more difficult, but greater; self-observation

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and liberation from the chains of Thought the most difficult of all, but the widest and greatest in its fruits. One can choose any of them according to one's bent and capacity. The perfect method is to use them all, each in its own place and for its own object; but this would need a fixed faith and firm patience and a great energy of Will in the self-application to the Yoga.

2. *What should be the object or ideas for meditation?*

Whatever is most consonant with your nature and highest aspirations. But if you ask me for an absolute answer, then I must say that Brahman is always the best object for meditation or contemplation and the idea on which the mind should fix is that of God in all, all in God and all as God. It does not matter essentially whether it is the Impersonal or the Personal God or, subjectively, the One Self. But this is the idea I have found the best, because it is the highest and embraces all other truths, whether truths of this world or of the other worlds or beyond all phenomenal existence,—“All this is the Brahman.”

In the third issue of *Arya*, at the end of the second instalment of the Analysis of the Isha Upanishad, you will find a description of this vision of the All which may be of help to you in understanding the idea.

3. *Conditions internal and external that are most essential for meditation.*

There are no *essential* external conditions, but solitude and seclusion at the time of meditation as well as stillness of the body are helpful, sometimes almost necessary to the beginner. But one should not be bound by external conditions. Once the habit of meditation is formed, it should be made possible to do it in all circumstances, lying, sitting, walking, alone, in company, in silence or in the midst of noise etc.

The first internal condition necessary is concentration of the will against the obstacles to meditation, i.e. wandering of the mind, forgetfulness, sleep, physical and nervous impatience and restlessness etc.

The second is an increasing purity and calm of the inner consciousness (*citta*) out of which thought and emotion arise, i.e. a freedom from all disturbing reactions, such as anger, grief, depression, anxiety about worldly happenings etc. Mental perfection and moral are always closely allied to each other.

21-9-1914

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LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q. What is the relation between the psychic and the Transcendent?

A. It is the psychic that is in direct relation with the transcendent Divine and leads the nature upwards towards the supreme.

Q. Has the psychic any direct relation with the universal?

A. The psychic is the support of the individual evolution; it is connected with the universal both by direct contact and through the mind, vital and body.

Q. Can it be said that the psychic is the soul in Aparā Prakriti as the ātman in the Parā Pakriti?

No. The psychic is the soul in evolution; the Atman is the self above the evolution.

Q. When one sees the image of the Divine in the heart does it mean that one sees it in the psychic being?

A. Either in the psychic or in the emotional being.

II

SADHANA

Q. Number of thoughts, like those of feeling for the future of the country etc. invade and deflect the mind from the Aspiration. Can they not be removed?

A. The vital mind in the ordinary nature cannot get on without these magninations—so the habit remains for a long time. To be detached and indifferent is the best, then after a time it may get disgusted and drop the habit.

14-4-1934

Q. There is something in me wanting to impress others that I am wiser than they. Pray, remove this element from me.

A. It is a vital vanity and egoism which wants to make that impression on others. It is practically universal in human beings—it does not go easily.

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The first thing to do is to see it, reject it as absurd and ridiculous and detach oneself from it entirely.

26-12-1933

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Q. When one has union with the Divine will he not feel that He is the one all-sufficing Master and Love and there is no need of anything or any one else?

A. That is the feeling of union—though it can include other things also.

Q. Does physical perfection mean anything more than that one can leave one's body when he wishes?

A. That is only one element of physical perfection. The body has to be entirely open to the higher Consciousness in all ways and function only according to Its will and divine Nature.

26-2-1934

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Q. What is the significance of our relation as children with the Mother?

A. The relation of the child to the Mother is that of an entire, sincere and simple trust, love and dependence.

Q. Though in my waking condition I give room to Doubt, in dream I get angry with those that doubt. Which condition is really true of me?

A. The truth lies in the internal being, not in the external condition.

Q. It is impossible, I find, to change the habits of my nature. Perhaps death may do it. Nature disappears with death.

A. It doesn't—it remains after death. It is only from within that can be changed.

23-3-1936

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LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q. There are some pulses which remain hard as ever though they are boiled and baked. Are there souls like the pulses which cannot be made to change their nature?

A. Not among human beings

8-5-1934

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Q. Is it that one can have union only after undergoing feeling of separation?

A. It is not necessary to have the feeling of separation.

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Q. In what sense can work here be said to be the divine consciousness?

A. I do not understand how work can be consciousness. It may be an expression of the consciousness e.g. right way of work the expression of the right consciousness, *niṣkāma karma* the expression of egolessness or of self-giving.

Q. Self-giving is in itself a delight, can disinterested work also be a delight?

A. Yes, if it is done in the spirit of self-giving.

18-3-1936

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Q. Some one said that if a yogi has his Shakti and if the Shakti demands physical contact the yogi has to fulfil it. Is that correct?

A. If the sadhak is a left-hand Tantric or a Vaishnava of the Bengal school, then his theories may have some validity, but they have none in this Ashram.

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The only relation permissible between a sadhak and sadhika here is the same as between a sadhak and sadhak or between a sadhika and sadhika—a friendly relation as between followers of the same path of Yoga and children of the Mother.

5-9-1936

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Q. Can it be that there cannot be any true psychic relation between a sadhak and sadhika or a sadhak, as is possible with the Divine Mother?

A. Such relations cannot be psychic and are bound to come in the way of the total self-dedication to the Divine. The relation should be that of sadhak with sadhak, fellow travellers of the same Path. If friendships are preserved they should be without the attachment which binds one to something else than the Divine.

9-9-1937

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Q. Special relations are to be excluded in sadhana now. But are they to be ruled out for all time?

A. Yes—such “special” relation belongs to the ordinary vital life. Whatever special relation there may be hereafter, must depend on the true consciousness and come from the Divine, not from the ego.

11-9-1937

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If you think there is no ego or desire in you, only pure devotion, that shows a great unconsciousness. To be free from ego and desire is a condition which needs a high siddhi in Yoga—even many Yogis of a great spiritual attainment are not free from it. For a sadhak at your stage of development to think he is free from ego and desire is to blind himself and prevent the clear perception of one's own nature movements which is necessary for progress towards spiritual perfection.

The Mother does not need to have your writings before her in order to see what is in you.

If your writing shows ego and desire, and they certainly do, it is because they are there without your perceiving it and express themselves without your intending it. What the surface mind thinks and intends is one thing; and what is behind the thoughts and actions is another thing. A man's surface mind shapes its own idea of oneself and one's nature in an entire self-ignorance. The first thing one has to do to get rid of this ignorance is to draw back from the surface mind and get into contact with the psychic which does not allow such delusions and shows one clearly the truth about one's movements.

8-6-1937

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LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q. When one has achieved union with the Transcendental does he feel 'I am blissful, I am pure. There is no impurity for me.'?

A. That may be true of the Atman—but it is not enough for us as we have to change the nature also.

27-3-1934

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It is for each sadhak to discover for himself whether he can take the Mother as divine or accept her government and guidance, or regards her as one like himself or inferior to himself whose conduct he can see rightly, weigh, condemn and judge. It is not for the Mother to explain or justify herself nor indeed was it ever the rule for the Guru to stand at the bar for the judgment of the disciple. Each has to see for himself whether he can give that obedience and self-opening to one who has or lives in the Divine Consciousness or has realised the Divine Truth, by which alone he can receive what is to be given.

19-12-1936

III

SYMBOLS: DREAMS AND VISIONS

Q. I saw the Mother. There were the outlines of a triangle upon her head.

A. It is not possible to say, for a triangle may mean several different things e.g. Sat Chit Ananda, mind life matter etc.

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Q. A cross standing upon a line at the base; the two ends of the side-wise line of the Cross are joined by a semi-circle.

A. The cross signifies the trinity of the Transcendent, Universal and Individual. The other line may mean the earth. The half circle is the lower hemisphere (the evolutionary consciousness).

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Q. Does Vina indicate anything?

A. Harmony.

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Q. I see a Vina in the heart centre; its top is on the right side of the chest, and the other side on the left.

A. I don't know that there is any particular significance in that—but on the whole it should mean Harmony in the higher vital (vital mind, emotional vital).

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Q. Vision: Green ducks going on the road.

Dream: Some portion of the ground was ploughed and it was sown. It began to rain and the seeds sprouted into blades.

A. Probably these are only things seen in the vital. The second can of course be symbolic.

27-8-1934

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Q. The sky full of stars; and a Pippul tree.

A. It is the symbol of the cosmic existence.

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Q. Three semi-circles one above the other; a straight line cutting through them in the middle; at both the ends of the line there are suns; one illumines the portion between the upper semi-circle and the middle; the other sun illumines the portion between the lower semi-circle and the middle. The semi-circle in the middle is of green-bluish colour.

A. It is not very clear. The greenish bluish might indicate something in the vital mental and emotional vital. The sun above might indicate the Truth-light on or above the Mind, below the same Light in the psychic. But this is a conjectural explanation.

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Q. A circle within a larger circle. Four rays shoot out from the smaller circle and cross the bigger. In the four segments thus created there are again tiny circles, one in each i.e. four. Does it signify anything?

A. Still less clear than the other. The circle may be the.....being, the inner circle the psychic, the four small circles four parts of the being; (mind, emotional, lower vital, physical) illumined by the psychic, but this too is a conjecture.

13-6-1935

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LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO

Q. *In sleep I saw the image of Sri Krishna with flute. Later when I got up I saw him in the heart in the same position. I told the image: There is no place in my heart for any except Sri Aurobindo's image. You may appear as Sri Aurobindo's image. It replied: 'I and Sri Aurobindo are the same'. How right was I right in what I did?*

A. Well, it is all right—but there is no harm in Sri Krishna's presence either.

9-3-1944

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Q. *I saw the Mother, above my head, coming down with a child in hand.*

A. The child means sometimes the psychic being—sometimes a new birth in the being.

9-3-1934

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SRI AUROBINDO

THE INTEGRALISM OF SRI AUROBINDO★

IT is not possible to describe the multiple aspects of the integralism of Sri Aurobindo within the short compass of an hour or so and as such, I shall attempt to underline some of its important features as briefly as possible. The integralism of Sri Aurobindo consists not only in the most comprehensive system of philosophy he has given to the world, in his laying down the ideal and scheme for the reconstruction of human life and society on the basis of a new rule of life, but also in his yoga which is also integral and aims at a radical transformation of human nature, his entire physical and vital-mental formation. True to the tradition of the East his philosophy is not merely a 'dialectical ratiocination' or an 'academical intellectual speculation'. It is an intellectual presentation of truths discovered by the Master in spiritual experiences and it indicates also the ultimate goal and consummation towards which the spiritual endeavours of man have to be directed. In short, it is not only a statement of the nature of the ultimate Reality in a language and in a manner understandable by the normal human intellect, but it also indicates the method and the rules of discipline that will ultimately help us to realise the same. Similarly, his yoga is integral, in as much as it indicates the method of an integral transformation of human nature. I shall now state, in brief, how the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo fits in with the background, namely, the tradition and the philosophical attitude of the East, in general, and of India, in particular.

Philosophers and thinkers have been honoured and respected in all countries in all ages for their learning, but in the East mere intellectuals were never looked upon as seers and discoverers of Truth. Intellect was never considered to be the right instrument for the discovery of the ultimate Truth which could only dawn upon the yogi through intuition and spiritual experience. Intellectual pursuits were however never discouraged in the East, but if the conclusions arrived at by the intellect militated against the

* Address delivered at the Sri Aurobindo Birthday celebrations at Madras in August 1955 under the auspices of Sri Aurobindo Study Circle, Triplicane.

THE INTEGRALISM OF SRI AUROBINDO

Truths seen or realised through intuition or spiritual experience the former were considered as invalid. It is Intuition or direct spiritual realisation that has always been considered to be the supreme authority in the matter of the discovery of the ultimate Reality and any system of thought which contradicted it was considered to be of no real significance. Almost invariably the greatest philosophical thinkers in the East were also great yogis and their systems of philosophy used to be intellectual presentations of the Truths already discovered by them through intuition and spiritual experience. Besides, in the East, specially in India, philosophy has a strong hold on the lives of even ordinary people and have coloured and influenced their culture and civilisation in the greatest measure. It not merely points out the ultimate Reality in a language understandable to the ordinary intellect but also indicates the method and lays down a rule of life that will help its realisation. Its constant care has not only been presentation of the nature of the ultimate Reality to the critical minds but also to put an accent on the realisation of the same. India has had more than a country's normal share of political subservience and it were her mighty philosophies that kept her alive through the gathering darkness of her political decadence. It were again these philosophies that were the bases of the world-renowned religions that India has given to the world.

In tune with this temperament of the East, the 'Life Divine' is the philosophical basis of his Integral yoga. It is the most comprehensive philosophical synthesis which presents to the discerning intellect the various aspects of Reality in a manner which is the wonder and admiration of the whole world. He reveals to the seeker of Truth the meaning and significance of Life and creation and brings to a stricken world messages of hope and cheer by revealing the divine destiny of man. In short, he initiates the human aspirant into the mysteries of this Lila of creation and reveals some of the multiple aspects of the ultimate Truth already seen by the Master in a dynamic Truth-Vision. He also gives to the world a system of integral living and integral sadhana which will ultimately lead to the consummation of man's spiritual endeavours. Herein consists his integralism—a comprehensive presentation of the Truth in all its aspects and laying down the method for its realisation through a process of yoga which is integral. I shall now briefly refer to some of the principal features of his philosophy.

His conception of the ultimate Reality is integral in every sense of the term. Sachchidananda is the ultimate Reality and is the source and inspiration of all that has become or been created. Sachchidananda is not the

featureless Brahma or some schools of thought. He holds in Himself infinite potentialities of manifestation and out of the infinite truths involved in His Being, one order of Truth, namely, The Many, has been cast out for manifestation by His Divine Maya or Chit-Shakti. It is the Divine that is throwing Himself out in infinite variations of names and forms and eternally enjoying the delight of this variation. It is His Chit-Shakti, variously termed as the Divine Maya, Supermind, Truth-Consciousness, that initiated the creative activity and is inherent in every part of the phenomenal world, from the tiny atoms to the gigantic planets, to guide and shape it according to a preconceived plan and lead it to its destination. It is the Ananda or the self-Delight of Being that is sustaining this creation. It is Ananda out of which this cosmos has come, it is Ananda that sustains it and to Ananda it shall return. There is indeed the One without a second but that One is not an emptiness, devoid of all contents, indeterminate and indeterminable as it has been conceived in some schools of thought. It is the integral One that contains the truths of the Many and holds in Itself the truths of infinite manifestation. It is the Divine Supermind that develops the world out of the One, out of non-manifestation. It brings into manifestation an order of truth according to a pre-determined idea. Yes, Brahman is Sachchidananda, the One Reality without a second, and as such all that has been created must be an expression of some truth of that One reality; the creation is therefore as real as Brahman is real, it has some divine significance and meaning; life on earth is not inevitably associated with pain and suffering and a dignified escape from its toils is not the only consummation devoutly to be wished for. Thus Sri Aurobindo's conception of Reality is not all-exclusive but it is all-comprehensive.

Now a pertinent question has to be answered: If Brahman is the one Reality the very term of whose existence is Bliss and Delight, if Delight is the sole reason of creation, how then are we to account for the pain and suffering that is undoubtedly the portion of man on earth? How is the supposition that cosmic existence has sprung out of Delight consistent with the facts of pain and suffering that assail humanity at every step?

Various solutions had been offered and rejected as unsatisfactory and for a time there grew a feeling of sullen resignation to the prevailing state of things which were accepted to be inevitably associated with life on earth and the only remedy suggested by some schools of thought was to bear it up with fortitude as long as this life would last and seek an ultimate release into the peace and silence of the featureless Brahma or in Nirvana. Sri

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Aurobindo has solved all these problems in his inimitable way and in a manner which is as convincing as it is illuminating. He first points out the fact that pleasure of existence is the normal state of things and pain is a contrary phenomenon or an abnormal occurrence. It is exactly for this reason that pain affects us so intensely and evil is experienced as an outrage on our existence. Life is normally pleasant and that is why we get so much disturbed when there is the slightest departure from the normal state of things. Thus we are apt to put an over-emphasis on the passing distempers of life. Even so, Sri Aurobindo states in extenso the cause and the real significance of what we experience as pain and evil. It is not possible to go into all the details here and I shall now refer in brief to his theory of evolution in the light of which all these inconsistencies stand explained.

Indeed his theory of Evolution is not only the pivot upon which the superstructure of his philosophy turns but it also contains the most convincing explanation of the many problems that had been baffling solution since the dawn of human enquiry. Before the advent of Sri Aurobindo evolution was looked upon as a more or less mechanical process; its inner meaning and significance had not been brought out and hence a merely mechanical view of evolution could explain little or nothing. It is the integral conception of Sri Aurobindo that reveals the inner meaning and significance of evolution. According to him, it is a spiritual evolution and it is this process by which Spirit is releasing Itself from Its self-imprisonment in Matter. I shall now refer to some of its principal features.

It has been revealed that it was for the delight of a novel experience that this world was created. The One while retaining its Unity becomes the Many, for the delight of manifesting Itself in innumerable finite centres. The Spirit descended, step by step, through various descending levels of consciousness to division and distinction till It involves Itself completely in apparent inconscience or Materiality; the Spirit puts on the mask of Matter, so to speak, for it is on the basis of Matter alone that infinite divisions and distinctions are possible; the Lord of creation, the Divine Supermind, plunges into the stupor of inconscience and materiality in pursuance of a preconceived plan and it is the Spirit that is now gradually waking up or releasing Itself from Its self-imprisonment in Matter through a slow and difficult process of evolution to perform a divine task. Matter, then, which looked so crude, lifeless and inconscient at the very inception of this world of names and forms was not a negation of Life and consciousness; it held imprisoned in its bosom the plenary consciousness and Force and Delight

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of the Lord Himself who had put on this mask of inconscience for the Delight of a novel experience. The descent of the Divine consciousness to inconscience was not headlong but gradual, step by step, through a process of self-limitation and self-absorption and the ascent of the Divine consciousness is also gradual through the reverse process of self-enlargement and self-finding. The Divine that concealed Himself behind inconscience has gradually emerged in this world, first in Matter, then in Life and Mind and finally He has to emerge as Spirit. Life and Mind evolved out of apparently inconscient Matter for they are the distorted reflections of the aspects of Force and Consciousness of the Divine which is involved in Matter. There is no reason to suppose that Nature will cry a halt to this process of evolution at this stage and that with the advent of Man the curtain will be rung down on further ascent of consciousness; for, it was the Supramental consciousness that was involved in Matter and put on the mask of inconscience and, as such, evolution has to proceed further and further till the next dominant principle, namely, the Divine Supermind, evolves out of its self-imprisonment in Matter—Life and Mind have evolved and by the logic of the process of Nature Supermind has yet to evolve.

Sri Aurobindo has drawn our attention to another very significant feature of this process of evolution. It will appear that there is ascent and integration at every stage of the process; as Life ascended out of Matter it did not cut itself away from the previous principle, Matter, but took up and made Matter the basis of its emergence, the vehicle of its expression, and as the next principle Mind emerged out of Life, it took up and integrated the two previous principles, Matter and Life, and made them the basis of its emergence. Thus in man the three principles of Matter, Life and Mind are integrated—he is a physical-vital-mental formation. None of the previous principles are discarded or rejected in the emergence of the next, but they are taken up and transformed to the extent necessary to make them proper instrument for its expression. Matter was partially transformed into the bodies of plants and made fit to express the throb of Life; the same process was followed in the next stages also and Mind appeared in a living material body, sufficiently transfigured and made a fit vehicle to hold and express the Mental principle. Thus in passing from one domain to another, from Matter to Life, from Life to Mind, Nature has not cast away the preceding ones; the preceding ones have been taken up, transfigured and made the basis of the next dominant principle. There is no reason why this process should not continue and it is bound to proceed and proceed integrally, that is to say,

THE INTEGRALISM OF SRI AUROBINDO

making up and transforming the physical-vital-mental being so that this become a proper vehicle for the manifestation of the next and final principle, namely, Supermind. What was involved must evolve. It was the Supermind that was involved, as has already been said, and, as such, this process of evolution will not stop till Supermind is evolved.

These are some of the salient features of the theory of Spiritual Evolution of Sri Aurobindo. It is unique not only in its integral conception but also in revealing the Divine significance of creation and the Divine destiny of man. It is stressed that man is not a crawling insect destined to wallow in pain and misfortune during the span of his troubled existence on earth awaiting deliverance through extinction of his being. He holds under the cloak of his ignorant consciousness the Divine Person or Chaitya Purusha who is destined to lead him step by step towards the divine destiny that awaits him at the end of his journey, namely, a radical transformation of his physical vital and mental formation. Pain and evil are the result of ignorance and they will persist as long as ignorance persists; they are not inevitably associated with life on earth and pleasure and pain will give place to Ananda, which they are veiled expressions, as ignorance is gradually dispelled by knowledge. Thus man is burdened with the task of fulfilling God in himself, not by a rejection of his physical-vital-mental basis in his attraction to the spiritual, not by abandoning his physical, vital and mental parts or impediments to his upliftment but by a radical transformation of his entire lower nature and his entire being in the light of the next dominant principle, Supermind. To be the Divine companion of the Lord in this Divine Lila of Creation is man's divine destiny for the fulfilment of which he is in travail since the beginning of creation.

Nothing more and I have done. The Master says, "Fullness of Life must precede the surpassing of Life", and that is why he has given to the world ideals of integral living which indicate the way to a satisfactory integration of the material and spiritual values of life. There is hardly any aspect of normal human interest, society, politics, education, art, literature, philosophy, religion, spiritualism, which has not been dealt by him in his integral way and there is hardly any problem arising out of them which has not been solved by him in the light of his dynamic Truth-Vision.

This integral yoga is none of the other methods which aim at bringing about the realisation at the summit of consciousness leaving the other parts of the being, including the lower nature, in utter darkness and ignorance. Its point and aim is comprehensive; it is not a system that would help a

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release or escape from life, its purpose is a divine fulfilment of life. This yoga aims at an integral change of the human consciousness and nature; it is not that only a part of our being, the physical vital or the mental has to be changed or purified, but its aim is a radical transformation of our body, life and mind which are the present constituents of the normal human being by the Light and Power of the next divine principle, Supermind, which has yet to evolve. The entire human person has to be completely transfigured with a view to be a fit receptacle for the Supermind just as our present formation has been sufficiently transformed to be the proper receptacle of the mental principle. Its aim is not at a departure out of world and life into heaven or Nirvana but a radical change of life and existence.

These, in short, are some of the important aspects of the integralism of Sri Aurobindo,—integral in his conception of the ultimate Reality, integral in its delineation and integral in his dynamic Truth-Vision which lights the path of the human seeker towards an integral realisation.

SIDDHESHWAR BANERJEE

THE LIFE DIVINE*

AN OUTLINE VOL. II

Part I: The Infinite Consciousness and the Ignorance.

CHAPTER I

Indeterminates, Cosmic Determinations and the Indeterminable.

CONSCIOUSNESS-FORCE is the creator of the worlds and exists everywhere. In our own being and in the material world, consciousness is divided; on the one hand there is a force of knowledge and on the other a force of ignorance. Beginning from a basis of Inconscience a slow evolution in the material universe is progressively manifesting consciousness. And in the present stage consciousness is struggling to emerge out of Ignorance into Knowledge. In the same way Life itself, founded on its opposite Death, has with difficulty built up against this opposition complex aggregates of life-forms.

Our knowledge is of phenomena, not the reality of things whose origin is a blank. Cosmic existence, basically an Infinite, is also an indeterminate, and seemingly indeterminable. This indeterminate universe has paradoxically given rise to a variety of determinates, which can only have a meaning if we consider that a veiled Force (which we call Nature) moves them according to an inherent Truth which they contain and which is also behind. Science has seen the process but not the origin of this movement. All we see as the origin is an Infinite containing a mass of finites.

To the mind the necessary basis of our conception of the universe is an infinite. We cannot see whether the beyond is a Non-Existence or an infinite Existence. Even the finite universe is limitless and ultimately infinite. All these indeterminates, however, do not explain the origin of the

* The paragraphing of the original has been followed

determinations in the universe. Space and Time, which are abstractions and themselves indeterminates, also give no clue to the origin of their cosmic determinations.

Science reveals Existence to be an Energy. Waves of energy contain a multitude of energy-particles which come together to form larger units (atoms). On this basis Matter was organised, and Life emerged, and then Consciousness. These processes we can observe in the evolutionary Nature, but we cannot explain the original process. Thus we do not know completely how different combinations of electrons can produce a series of different atoms, or how atoms combine to form completely new substances, or how genes and chromosomes transmit psychological variations, or how the activity of the brain gives rise to a work of art or great thought. It is clear that Science cannot disclose the intrinsic how or why of Nature's processes.

What we know is that the original indeterminate Energy has given rise to general determinates, numerous forms and variations of substance, which appear to be unconnected with their origin. This seems to be a universal but inexplicable law, where one common origin or principle, itself indeterminate, is capable of producing countless determinate variations. There seems to be no final meaning in this diverse play of varying possibilities, unless we see in it some expression of the secret delight of creation.

One explanation of the universe is that all creation is the work of Chance. Here determinations are only the result of a persistent repetition. It is true that in the original inconscient Energy there must have been innumerable possibilities. Yet out of this an evolving order has arisen. This suggests a second explanation: that a mechanical Necessity is the underlying Truth of things. But even this does not account for the free play of variations and the emergence of consciousness out of the Inconscient. We must eventually admit that concealed in the Inconscient there has been the seed of consciousness. We are here clearly faced with a double paradox: that consciousness has emerged from Inconscience, and that order and reason have appeared out of a blind Chance.

Other explanations have to be sought; such that Consciousness itself is the creator of the world out of inconscient substance, and that there is a veiled Mind behind creation which has produced a screen of inconscient Energy. Is then creation merely the thought-product of an extra-cosmic Divinity? If so what is the purpose of this play of ignorance and suffering and the undivine elements which are the very opposite of the Divinity?

A more satisfactory explanation is that the creator, though exceeding

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creation, is yet immanent in it. For we see that underlying the material Energy is a secret involved Consciousness which manifests forms here by the process of evolution. Free variation of possibilities would then explain the working of Chance, while the presence of persistent powers of the Infinite, which imperatively fulfil themselves, would explain mechanical Necessity.

Energy seems to create substance, but in reality substance is inherent in Energy. Substance, in fact, is apprehended by the material sense in the forms of Matter, but the involved elements are ever present. Thus the seed itself contains the compressed energy-substance of the developed organism, and in the same way genes and chromosomes carry their hidden psychological elements, and even the subconscious physical parts carry in them the impressions and habits from the distant past.

We can understand therefore that the mind can act on the physical energy-substance of the body making the latter its instrument for movement. In addition the material body, since it contains a secretly conscious Energy, also influences the mind's action. But the Truth is that mind dominantly directs the body; and a still deeper Truth is that a spiritual entity, a soul within, is the secret guide of both mind and body. The interaction of mind and body is accounted for by the fact that a secret consciousness in living matter responds directly to the mental consciousness. Thus a divine Mind and creative Will operating through a Consciousness that is emerging through evolution becomes justifiable.

But to see clearly the true origin of things behind the outer movements of Nature, we have to follow the higher reaches of our evolving consciousness. Life as well as Matter are both below the conscious level of Mind. And Mind at first is involved, in the thoughts and reasonings of the mental being. We only begin to see the further process—a step towards the discovery of the truth of things—when we stand back and observe the workings of the mental Energy in ourselves.

A profounder result of self-observation comes when we quieten the mind. We discover firstly that mind contains the seed of the Indeterminate, but in its action it creates determinations of itself in the form of thoughts. These mental determinations are composed of currents of mental energy that enter from outside, from a universal Mind or other minds. Secondly we see that there is a subliminal mind from which mental feelings and perceptions arise. And there are also higher planes of consciousness. Thirdly we discover that a mental being (or Purusha) is the true observer, supporting

the mind energy. It is this mental Purusha that first appears as the silent witness; but its true role is the active ruler, the knower. But does this mental Purusha create the determinations, or are all formations those of a universal Mind, or are they the dynamic truth of the hidden Self manifested on the mind's surface?

The cosmic truth can only be grasped when we reach the Overmind consciousness beyond the mind in Ignorance. We then realise that both the individual and the cosmos come from a transcendent Reality. But even so, the individual will and nature exert a shaping influence. The question, however, still remains whether the thought experience of the mental Purusha is a self-determination or is created by an external Nature (Prakriti). Or is all creation the play of a cosmic Imagination? Overmind cannot resolve these three views of creation, since it sees that each is valid in its own right.

In Overmind we clearly have not reached the true integrating Oneness. The opposition of a divine Reality free from determinates (Nirguna), and a divine Reality who is the source and container of all determinations (Saguna), is not yet reconciled. Overmind maintains equally and independently these two truths of the Eternal.

Since the Absolute is, in its transcendence, free of determinations, there must be a Power (a reality of itself) that has created the universe of determinates. But since also the Absolute and the Power find Oneness in the supreme Reality, how have determinates originated from that which is free of determinates? The question is not resolved by considering the Absolute as a Non-Existence, or contrarily that the creation is an illusion. We have to see that the Absolute is Indeterminable only in the sense that it is not limited by any determinations, and that the supreme Reality cannot by any means be the creator of an unreality.

When we rise to the supramental cognition beyond Overmind we realise the true reconciling Oneness. Here we see that the Infinite is the foundation, and that the Power is its dynamis of self-existence. Thus the Infinite of Being is an Infinite of Power which contains endless powers of its being. All possible manifestations are then realities of the Divine Absolute. But ordinarily we see only the possibilities and not the Reality behind them. It is the supramental Truth-Consciousness that experiences all as one indivisible whole.

Spiritual experience has revealed the Absolute to be eternally an Existence, Consciousness and Delight of Existence. To the mind experience (and even Overmind) these are three separate aspects. But to supermind

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cognition they are an inseparable Trinity, where Delight expresses itself as Love, Joy and Beauty; Consciousness as Knowledge and Will; and Existence as the fundamental powers of manifesting Self (Atman), the Divine (Ishwara) and Conscious Being (Purusha).

Each of these aspects has its own triple poise, (thus knowledge bases itself on the knower, the known and knowledge), and each poise has its own lines of determinate relations and forms. All these outbranchings of powers and possibilities are unified and harmonised by Supermind. It is our present separative consciousness that cannot see this higher Reality, Consciousness and Power. The mind itself has to awaken to this integral Truth.

But the Absolute is not limited by any sum of its determinations; neither is it bound to any pure indeterminability. It is both the Indeterminable as well as the source of all determinations. We experience it through spiritual experience as the immutable Self, the Non-being, who is at the same time the Eternal with infinite qualities.

Both aspects are one and inseparable, although we experience them separately as the immutable self not bound by the creations of Nature, and as the dynamic creator of a world of determinations, expressing freedom in infinite variations. It is possible also for the individual being to partake of this dynamic freedom. For a stage is reached when one can pass from the mental to the supramental status, especially after the mind has been absorbed in the silence of the Spirit. We see then that in Supermind there is always the Unity of all, and with each being, while on the other hand in the Overmind cognition each aspect and power retains its own independent potentiality. In the surface mind we lose that knowledge of unity in an exclusive separateness, and only in reaching the spiritual mind do we begin to experience the truth of integral oneness.

We now see that Inconscience which seems the negation of the eternal Reality is the Infinite's power of self-oblivion of the Spirit, a self-involution where all is latent. The Inconscience corresponds at the lower extremity to the infinite silence of the Superconscience at the heights of Spirit. This self-oblivion of the Inconscience is the basis or first condition out of which Ignorance has next emerged in the material universe.

We speak of Ignorance not as an abiding factor of the creation, which is neither illusory nor temporary. It is the Ignorance that is a subordinate or temporary movement, an as yet imperfect but evolving knowledge in which the true self-awareness is concealed. The outcome of this movement

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is the complete emergence and manifestation of the integral self-knowledge in the cosmos.

Beyond the supramental plane is the pure Divine Nature of Sachchidananda; yet in these greatest heights of manifested Spirit the Truth-consciousness is ever present. Here identity, inclusion and interpenetration of consciousness exist in mutual delight of being, and not in a blank nothingness.

Above all manifestation there is the pure existence, consciousness and delight of existence; yet even in this ineffable Absolute all the inherent truths of the supreme being that we experience in the universe are present in a pre-existent stage.

CHAPTER II

BRAHMAN, PURUSHA, ISHWARA—MAYA, PRAKRITI, SHAKTI.

There is a supreme Reality that is absolute and infinite, and hence indeterminate. It cannot be defined by the limited mind; and yet it is not altogether unknowable. There is a spiritual being in us which is one with the Supreme, and it can know that greatest Reality through knowledge by identity.

Thus we discover that the Supreme has determined itself in the universe by truths which are at the same time beyond the universe. We can seize these truths by a spiritual intuition or by a widened idea expressed in a direct revelatory language, not in abstractions. We thus have to become accustomed to the logic of the Infinite in order to comprehend this greater knowledge.

We become aware of this supreme Truth-aspect as an infinite self-existence, self-awareness, self-delight of being which pervades, supports and dwells in all things. Each of these aspects has also its three terms: thus self-existence appears as self (Atman), conscious being (Purusha), and God (Ishwara). In a sense all is the Supreme (or Brahman) in manifold forms and aspects. Brahman is at once Mind, Life, Matter, as well as Consciousness, dynamic Force, and the Bliss of existence. Brahman is the inner Soul of all things as well as the Lord of all Beings. He is the Absolute who sustains the Cosmic Self (Atman) which is also the self of each individual. His Consciousness-Force has become the Creator (Ishwara) whose eternal portion is the soul or psychic entity of the individual. The dynamic power of the Ishwara is his creative Force (Yoga-Maya) which is at the same time

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Conscious Power (Shakti); while Purusha is the individualising aspect of the eternal Spirit.

This omnipresent Infinite is at once impersonal and personal. Thus Existence is at the same time the one Being. The Power of Consciousness has also its three fundamental aspects: the creative Maya, the executive Prakriti, and the conscious Power of the Divine Being or Shakti. The three aspects and their Powers are not only truths of the cosmic universality, but of the supracosmic Transcendence, and of the separative individual existences also, and hence the basis of our total existence.

The logical intellect only sees this one Reality in its separate aspects, and because of this sees only contradictions. Thus the Absolute is the Creator and yet the silent Witness of the workings of Nature, whose processes appear to us miraculous. Yet there is a hidden reason in things; although we should note that processes operate by different laws on different levels of existence—in matter, in life and in mind. Hence our rationality on the limited mental, or rather intellectual, level has difficulty in probing the other levels.

The creation appears to us miraculous because of our inability to discover its secret plan. Our finite consciousness cannot measure the Infinite. Ordinarily our reason takes the finite operations of Nature and extends them to generalised universal conceptions. But we have to realise that there are different orders and standards of reality. Atoms, composed of electrons (particles of energy), aggregate to form molecules, and these form complex compounds which build up the units of Life, the cell. But the laws of matter cannot explain life movements, and still less the action of mind and soul. The interaction of life and matter, as well as that between life and mind, which we see in our own body, have each their own different mode of working as distinct from the purely physical laws. But we see further that each principle or finite has behind it the working of an Infinite; and it is the knowledge of this occult Infinite that can give the clue to the phenomenal working. We thus see that both the infrarational and the suprarational are beyond the intellect.

The logic of the Infinite belongs to a greater order of reason than our finite logic; for it embraces all beyond our ordinary observation. Through intellect alone we cannot see why out of the same nexus of forces different results are possible. The intellect is an indirect instrument of knowledge dependent on reason and the senses; intuition, on the other hand, belongs to direct awareness.

The working of an infinite Consciousness and Will is not subject to an ethical reason set up by our own standards of judgement. In order to see the action of the Infinite we have to make our faculty of reason plastic and open to larger possibilities, for it is clear that the Infinite cannot be defined by any one term or aspect. The Infinite is at one and the same time an essentiality in things, a boundless totality, and a multitude. This is the basis of the whole knowledge we are seeking.

We have to see both the static silence and the dynamic truth of the Infinite, since one side of the Truth is not the whole Truth. This integral Truth of sameness or unity of action and diversity with harmony of action must become the inner basis of our own progress.

From the viewpoint of a plastic reason we see that our real difficulty is verbal and conceptual. To us the Absolute is indeterminable and yet it has created a world of determinations. But the Absolute is not a negative Principle, but is free to determine itself infinitely. There cannot be any real contradiction between the Absolute's freedom from limitation and its own creation; one is complementary to the other.

When we see the illimitable freedom of the Infinite it is the positive expression of its freedom and infinity, not a negative or contrary aspect. This becomes clear when we realise that all qualities are powers of the Absolute, freely put forth or held back in itself. The mind cannot easily grasp this infinitude of action and qualities and powers of the Absolute.

But how has the One, the Transcendent, become the Many, its apparent opposite? Here we are thinking of One as the mathematical finite unit which can only become the many by fragmentation. The infinite Oneness can contain and become infinite multiplicity, and at the same time exceed all multiplicity in infinite oneness.

Likewise the immobile silence of the Spirit is also the infinite power and energy, the force of the Spirit. The silence is the basis of the movement; so in our own being when we arrive at this immobile stability we can base on it a higher force and energy. It is the witnessing silence of the Spirit in all the workings of Nature.

The Infinite is at once Form and the Formless. The Formless is the condition of free formation; and it is because it is formless that the Divine manifests all possible shapes of being. Form is the body of the formless, and Name is the character or quality of that form. Hence the formlessness of the Infinite is also nameless.

A finite can only exist by the Infinite, but it is not a division of the In-

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finite. Every object is a formation and expression of the one Reality, the Indivisible. Each object is one with the Infinite and with all other objects.

The One has become the Many but there is no division of the One. The Creation adds nothing to the Infinite, which is not merely a sum of things. Nothing is separate or unconnected without a common basis or essence, for the Identical is the root of all things.

All things have a common identity and yet each thing is different from the other. Force, substance, mind, life are each a recognisable unity belonging to one harmony, and yet each manifests varying formations. The indwelling Reality has built the universe on the principle which we see in the development of one seed into a million different fashions. This multiplication does not affect the underlying immutability of the Identical, because the Self and Spirit in things is one everywhere.

Since universal existence moves between a diversification of the One and a unification of the Many, we use logic to find the right perceptions of relations, and reason to find the one law and reality unifying the differentiation of the many.

Having considered the being of the Supreme we now consider its consciousness or creative Power, Maya. Maya, the universal consciousness and force of the Eternal, is one and manifold in its action. We have to note firstly that this Power is at once All-Being, Cosmic Self and individual being, and expresses a free power of self-variation. This opens the way for the individual consciousness to know itself as universal, and again as transcendent. Later we have to consider the connection between our own limited status of consciousness and the infinite all-knowledge.

Secondly we have to see that the Infinite Consciousness is also a power of self-limitation. Each individual self is a different psychological centre, each manifesting its own truth of the Infinite. The spiritual individuality thus expresses a specialised centre that acts according to its own self-nature, accepting a conscious limitation. In the same way there must also be a power of cosmic limitation, which instigates and maintains independent actions, as we see in Mind, Life and Matter. But at the same time this cosmic or individual conscious self-limitation does not yet account for the division or ignorant separation of our own consciousness.

Thirdly a power of complete self-absorption of the Infinite Consciousness has to be admitted. This self-absorption expresses itself in two opposite cosmic poles, either in the involved self-awareness of the Super-conscience

or at the opposite extreme in the self-oblivion of the Inconscient. From this we can admit a partial action of self-absorption where separative awareness becomes possible,—awareness of one field of being while the rest is veiled and not outwardly active.

We now see that there is no opposition between the higher Nature—pure consciousness pure existence, pure bliss—and the manifold activity of the universe, since the Infinite Consciousness, static and dynamic, has both aspects present simultaneously. What we see as staticity holds within itself the latent powers of dynamism, and the dynamism itself has ever the vigilant support of the silent status. It is thus possible for the individual to experience a double consciousness, one on the surface moved by the ignorance and the dualities, and the other a calm, vast, witnessing detachment. From a higher consciousness it is possible to both observe and act on the parts of our inner and outer being. We can thus either enter into the workings of our nature, or withdraw from them into an inmost centre of our being. We can also experience an equal, enveloping consciousness that realises the omnipresent Oneness. All these states are admissible to a larger reason or to the spiritual soul.

In relation to the universe Maya is the dynamic consciousness and Force, while its immobile, immutable being is the Self or Atman. In the individual we realise the Conscious Being or witnessing self as detached from the activities of Nature, the Prakriti. But above all, in the Transcendent, there is the Conscious-Power of the Supreme, the Shakti, that acts through the Maya and the Prakriti. There is no real duality between the Divine Reality and its Consciousness-Force (Chit-Shakti). Although the static immobility is the fundamental and impersonal aspect of the Supreme, it is never separate from its activity. Thus we can experience in our own being the Self as the individual centre, and also its vast universality, and ultimately its oneness with the Transcendence. At the same time the Self can be realised as identified with the movements of Nature. The Self here represents the eternal freedom of the Spirit.

While the Self is essentially transcendental, the Purusha is universal-individual and is closely connected with Nature. Purusha is both impersonal and personal, and imparts its consciousness to the Energy which is Nature. This play of Purusha and Prakriti we experience in ourselves. If the Purusha is passive we become subject to the blind forces of Nature. If the Purusha becomes aware of itself as Witness we can know the processes of Nature, and reject the present formation in order to re-create from the spiritual

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level. Eventually Purusha can become lord of its Nature, Ishwara.

In the old Sankhya philosophy Purusha (or Consciousness) and Prakriti (Energy of Nature) are eternally separate but at the same time in relation to each other. Matter, life, sense, mind and even intelligence belong to Prakriti (Nature), while the pure consciousness of soul and Spirit is the Purusha. Nature can only become active by the assent of spirit; Purusha becomes the free master of Prakriti by refusing to be involved in Matter. Three fundamental modes characterise Nature, and only when they are in equilibrium is there quiescence. While Nature is one, Purusha is plural as individual souls. Such is the position of Sankhya which expresses pragmatic truths but not the fundamental truth of either self or Nature. As Nature evolves so she reveals a concealed consciousness; and so also the individual soul in its own self finds a oneness with all souls. The oneness of soul and Nature is the wider truth.

It is the Transcendent Self that becomes the Purusha and rules its own Nature. The duality has been created so that the Spirit may be free to control and work out Nature. Many possibilities are open to the Spirit in its action on Nature. The supreme Conscious Being is the Purushottama; while his supreme Nature is the Para-Prakriti. In a similar way Mind-Nature has its mental being, Life-Nature its vital being, Matter its physical being and Supermind the Being of Knowledge. In the individual the Purusha stands behind all as the psychic Entity.

In the cosmic relation Being is the lord of its Nature. In the transcendent it is the Divine Being who is the master and creator of the universe. The supreme Person is the controller of all energies, the Inhabitant of all souls and minds, the Creator who has built all in his own being. He is the Spirit in all, the Father of all, and in his Consciousness-Force the Divine Mother. He is not a personal God possessed of qualities, but the Eternal, the Infinite, the Ineffable, the Divine Transcendence.

Yet there is no real opposition between the aspects of personality and impersonality. Nature, the inconscient Energy, appears in the world to be entirely impersonal. Personality only appears with the emergence of consciousness. But personality is at first restricted, and can only be surpassed by rising to the Transcendence. What we lose is the superficial consciousness, for behind is the one, real, eternal Person, the Almighty. He is the omnipresent Conscious Being. In ourselves we must become conscious of this true Person and not confuse personality with the ego, which being limited has created the opposition. The supreme reality is transcendent as eternal

Being or Self, is cosmic as Being or Person, and the same Self is the individual Being or Person.

The Divine Being as Ishwara is the ruler of world-existence, but not in the human sense acting by a mental will. He is the all-consciousness aware of the truth of all things. The Divine is free and unbounded, yet He acts by laws which express the truth—actual and potential—in things. He exceeds all actions of Nature, but He is also present in them. Nature in the world is but a limited expression of the Supernature. Within the outer, mechanical, automatic law is a spiritual law of consciousness which gives a secret conscious necessity to Nature's apparent arbitrariness. In viewing the divine government of the world we tend to be either anthropomorphic (as in the religious standpoint), or mechanical (as in the scientific). The truth is that the world is governed by the One in all and over all, according to a law and logic of an infinite consciousness.

We now see that on the static formation of the immobile Self-Existence, the Consciousness-Force (or Maya) creates the eternal dynamism. To see the complete truth we have to experience both the Silence and the Dynamism. The Consciousness-Force (Maya or Shakti) is seen to be the power of Being (of the Ishwara) who is the lord of all this creative movement and forces of Nature. What Nature does is done by the Spirit; there is no duality.

Absorbed in the Silence Nature and the creation cease to exist or be real. Also experiencing the Being as Person and Ruler the Shakti disappears and becomes an attribute of His cosmic personality. Yet we have to see the many-sided Reality of the Infinite. The impersonal and personal is one truth, and so is the dual Person, the Divine Self (and Creator) and the Divine Mother (and Creatrix). In the superconscient these two (masculine and feminine aspects) are fused; but in the universe they become the dual principle of Mother-Energy and the cosmic Self (Ishwara). The Ishwara acts only through her as executive Nature. And since we also are children of Nature our surrender to the Divine Being must be through the Divine Mother. Thus our ascent into the higher Nature of Supermind can only be done through the supramental Shakti. Thus we can affirm that one Reality supports the manifest creation as Self, experiences it as Purusha, and governs it as Ishwara, and its action is maintained by the Consciousness-Force through the respective principles, Maya, Prakriti, and Shakti.

To present this spiritual experience of a manifold Oneness to the mind we have to use abstract terms or formulas. But such philosophical presentation does not transmit the living spiritual or mystic vision, the inner reality.

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What then is the true connection between the individual Soul and the Divine Being? All is a creation of God, but at the same time each individual soul is an immortal portion of the Divinity. The Many exist by the One. It is the ego that hides from us this oneness and the dependence of the individual being on the Divine. Therefore we must proceed by surrender of soul and nature to the Divine Being in order to attain to our highest self, and surpass the ego. This is the decisive step towards our realising oneness and Identity with the Divine.

A last question remains. Is the manifestation a partial movement, an inferior order, since the timeless Non-manifest would seem to be the ultimate true reality? First we realise that what is fundamental in the Time-expression is pre-existent in the Transcendent. Both Time and the Timeless are the same Eternity in a double status—one in motion and the other immobile.

Time and Space is the timeless and spaceless Reality self-extended to reveal what was within it. Whereas we see Space as a fixed order, and Time as a movement, Space is really a constant mobile that creates in us the sense of time-movement. While Space is that which holds forms and objects together in their relatedness, Time is the movement of power that carries the forms and objects.

In the material world Space appears as an extension of material Energy, (or metaphysically) a representation of the Inconscient Infinity in action. Time would then be the course of that movement, (or psychologically) an impression created by it, for Time is something felt subjectively by the mind.

We realise that there is a different Time and Space for each status of our consciousness, all issuing from a spiritual reality of Time-Space. Behind the physical Space we become aware of a subjective Space-extension in which mind lives and also acts upon space in matter. In a deeper consciousness we become aware of a pure spiritual Space where Time as we know it no longer seems to exist.

The Time movement is relative, although Time itself is real. Each state of consciousness has its own Time, which are related to each other. Both Space and Time originate in us as a subjective experience, but by the sense-mind space is projected into an objective field. Our sense of Time (which is beyond the sense-mind) arises from our mental awareness of happenings as things in detachment from our witnessing consciousness. Time in its original status is the eternity of the Eternal; and Space is the infinity of the Infinite.

Eternity has three states of Consciousness. First there is the timeless eternity; second, the awareness of the totality, but in successive relation; and third, the successive or processive movement, which is Time in movement. We see then that there are many standpoints in which Time can be viewed, but the being of the Infinite can experience all positions in a simultaneous vision. All elements in this whole-vision are seen to be closely related in a harmony, a unity of the diverse aspects of the one Reality.

In the same way we can see the possibility of the co-existence of a Timeless and a Time Eternity, two simultaneous and interconnected powers of the infinite and eternal Reality.

NATHANIEL PEARSON

URVASHI IN THE RIG-VEDA

URVASHI is connected with Swargaloka in the popular imagination. She is one of the many Apsaras that dance in the Court of Indra, the Lord of Heaven. So much has been written not only in the Puranas about her but even in literature that one hardly notices the fact of her vedic origin. Kalidas speaks of her as *sukumaram praharāṇam mahendrasya* "the delicate missile of Indra"—and Tagore has given one of the finest lyrics on Urvashi as the "Ideal Beauty" in Bengali.

But many legends and gods that figure in the Puranas find their origin in the Veda. The legends connected with the Angirasas, those of Sarama, the Dasyus, the Maruts, Aditi, Diti, Rakshasas, Gandharvas, Apsaras, etc. all find their origin in the Veda.

But because the origin of the legend is in the Veda, it does not follow that it has the same significance in the Veda. There are no stories in the Puranic sense in the Veda. The hymns only mention the name, but in connection with some action or incident, and so there is much difficulty in ascertaining their true significance.

The Brahmanas, Yaska and Sayana, all have committed the mistake of applying the Puranic legends to the Veda. That is to say, they all try to read the developed legend into the original hymns. This is really the reversal of the true process for understanding them. The Vedic hymns must explain the Puranic legends and not vice versa.

Veda speaks of many kinds of beings over and above man. It accepts the existence of worlds other than the material earth and of beings on those planes. Thus, we have the gods, the demons, the Rakshasas, the Apsaras, the Gandharvas, etc. These bright and divine beings as well as the dark and undivine ones act on the human being. Beings of all the worlds have entrance here and act upon man. The struggle between the forces of Light and those of Darkness is spoken of in the Veda and it finds amplification and padding in the later Puranas in which plenty of elements of popular imagination are brought into play to make it understood by the ordinary man.

References to Urvashi in the Rig-Veda are as follows: II.27.14; IV.2.18; V.41.19; VII.33.10; VIII. 38.11; and X.95, which is the colloquy of Pururavas and Urvashi.

It is clear from the study of these hymns that the word "Urvashi" is not used in all contexts to indicate a person of that name. In II.27.14, the seer prays for *abhayam jyotiḥ* in "Urvashi." Sayana himself does not always interpret this word as a proper noun. In IV.2.18 the main deity is Agni, Fire, to whom the Rik is addressed. Vamadeva speaks here of two things: 1. herds of the Cows in an opulent place and 2. birth of the Gods. Both these illumine Urvashi—"the wideness of mortals." In V.41.19 "Urvashi" occurs in both the lines of the Rik. Here she raises the chant and she covers with her light the offering of the sacrifice. There is no idea of the nymph of heaven or even of the water-spirit here.

Urvashi mentioned here (V.41.19) with *Ilā* and the Rivers must therefore represent a similar psychological function. It is clear also that she is not here the celestial nymph of the later day Puranas. In the Veda we must accept "the psychological sense suggested not only by the context but by etymology." It indicates "wide enjoyment" or "infinite delight." It is when one has found the "fearless Light"—*abhayam jyotiḥ*¹—that one can have "Urvashi",² the "wide enjoyment." It is when one is settled in Urvashi (wide enjoyment, above) that one experiences *abhayam jyotiḥ*—"the fearless Light." Beyond the heaven of the Mind—Dyuloka, we find in the Veda several intermediate planes between Mind and Ritam i.e., Supermind. There is *Brhat Divā*³—the "great Heaven" and there are the *Triṇi Rocanā*⁴ "the three shining realms." Of all these realms of Swar Indra is the Lord. The "great heaven" has the "wide enjoyment", Urvashi. This original Vedic symbolism seems to have given rise to the Puranic legend in which Urvashi figures as a celestial nymph—clearly a power in the hands of Indra. In fact, Kalidasa speaks of her as *sukumaram praharaṇam* of Mahendra! But we are here not concerned with the Puranic legend.

In all these references the etymological sense उरु+अश् is dominant. उरु *Uru*, wide; and अश् *Aś*—to enjoy. The name so formed can convey "wideness" either of Light or of delight. Urvashi in these hymns is connected with Light, wideness, speech and Illumination.

¹ अभयं ज्योतिः

² उर्वशी

³ बृहत्+दिवा

⁴ त्रीणि रोचना

URVASHI IN THE RIG VEDA

It is in VII.33 and in X.95 that we find indications of the origin of later day legends. In VII.33 Urvashi is connected with Vasishtha and in X.95 with Pururavas.

In VII.33 Urvashi is the mother of Vasishtha. He is the *mānasaputra* of Urvashi by Mitra and Varuna. Vasishtha with Agastya is born from a pot. It is stated in the hymn that he is *Urvaśyā manaso jātah*—"born from Urvashi's mind." It is seen here that she is not yet the nymph of Indra's heavenly court. Pururavas is not mentioned here. Though Urvashi is spoken of only in VII.33.11 it is thought advisable to give the gist of the whole Sukta in order to bring out the full significance:

VII.33

Fair, (of colour) with their hair knot tied up on the right side, urging thoughts, they give me joy; I stand up and declare round the sacrificial-seat to warriors (or gods) "do not remove the Vasishtas away from me." (1) They it was who led Indra from afar across the tank (or Bowl) of strong drink, from the Soma of Vayat, son of *Pāsadyumna*. Indra chose the Vasishtas (2).¹ In the same way, by them they (the people) crossed the river easily; similarly, with their help, they killed division; in the same way, they—the Vasishtas, by their hymns made Indra protect *Sudāsa* in *Dāśarājña* (battle). (3) O, men,—(of the Vasishṭa family) by your hymns are the Fathers happy; may you not come to harm the Immutable, the Imperishable; for, by their hymns that invoke power, it was the Vasishtas who held the Force in Indra by their great voice. (4) Thirsty, surrounded, in need of help in the *Dāśarājña*, (battle) they (the Vasishtas) upheld (us) like the heaven,—it was Vasishtha's hymns that Indra heard (paid attention to) and made for the Tritsus that wide, other world. (5) The Bharatas were split up on all sides (like) helpless children, bereft like the sticks used for driving the cows;—then, when the Vasishtas walked in front of them—(took the lead), the people of the Tritsus, flourished. (6) It is the Three that make the creative energy in the worlds, Three are the nations that are Aryan in whose front is the Light, three Shining Ones that cleave to the Dawn—the Vasishtas know them all. (7) Like that of the Sun is their increasing Lustre, their greatness is profound like that of the Ocean, their speed is like that of the wind; your hymns of praise, O Vasishtha!, are not for another to follow—(i.e., to imitate). (8) They (the Vasishtas) alone move freely on the secret tree of the thousand branches (i.e. the world) by the

¹ (May you not be harmed by the Immutable and the Imperishable).

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perceptions of the heart, weaving the cover (or cloth) extended by the Controller, the Vasishtas approached the Apsarasas (9) (It is not certain whether the 10th Rik is by Indra or by Sons of Vasishta. Sayana).

When Mitra and Varuna saw thee bounding forth¹ from the Light that was like lightning, it was thy one (or sole) birth, when Agastya carried to thee the people from all sides. (10) Hence, O' Vasishta, thou art the son of Mitra and Varuna, born, O' Brahman, from the mind of Urvashi; a drop emitted, all the gods by the divine hymns held thee in the lotus. (11) He, (Vasishta), the perceiver knows well the two worlds, he is a thousand-giver, or is himself a gift; having woven the cover (or cloth) extended by the Controller (Yama), Vasishta was born from the Apsara. (12) Born in the sacrificial sessions, impelled by prostrations (of surrender), they sprinkled equal fluid in the pot; from the middle rose *Māna*,—from there the Rishi that was born was called Vasishta. (13)

Note: "Paridhim,"—Vastram, Paridhiyatē anēna janmādi pravāho vivakṣitah; (9th Rik); Paridhiritayanena samsarapravāho vivakṣitah (Rik.10) (Sayana)

It is clear from this hymn that Vasishta and his Gotra (family people) were men of fair complexion and their Soma-juice had special appeal to Indra. Like Vishwamitra, the Vasishtas also render easy the crossing of the Rivers by men of Sudasa in the Dasharagna battle. Vasishta seems to have rendered signal service to the Bharatas under Tritsu. The leadership of the Vasishtas gave them the wide world and the lost unity. Vasishta has the mystical knowledge of the two worlds: he knows the web of birth and death and the tree of life. He approaches the Apsaras for a higher birth, higher than human and physical. Mitra and Varuna see him spring forward from Light. This birth of Vasishta in Light is his spiritual birth. In this Sukta there is no direct relation spoken of between Mitra, Varuna and Urvashi. It is inferred and added by later commentators, and has gained currency. This birth in Light, to my mind, is his birth in Urvashi. The words of the hymn are मनसो जातः,—*"manaso jātah"*—*"born from Urvashi's mind"* and later it is mentioned that he had his birth in the Apsara. These statements put together prove almost conclusively that the plane of Urvashi is the plane of consciousness in which Light i.e. Knowledge, is self-existent. That was the inner, spiritual birth of Vasishta. In X.95 also Urvashi is described as *"Shining like Lightning"* (X.95.10).

In fact, the word “Vasishta”, like the word “Urvashi”, is not in its origin a proper name. It is formed from the root Vas: to shine. The meaning is “most-shining” or “One most Shining”.

In II.9.1 where the word “Vasishta” occurs it is an adjective *Adabdha vratapramati Vasiṣṭha sahasram bharah śucijihvaḥ Agnih*.¹ Sayana explains it as *sarvasya vāsaiṣṭamah*² “one who shines most or makes all shine.” He quotes Aitareya Brahmana in his support: *Agnirvai devānām Vasiṣṭhaḥ*³ II.28. “Agni is the Vasishta, the most full of Light, among the gods.”

In IX. 2.3 there is a reference to Vasishta: *Apo Vasiṣṭa Sukratu*.⁴ Sayana says: *Vasati varirvasiṣṭhaḥ*⁵ and adds *acchādayati*, “Covers.” Vasishta means “one that covers the waters”—but it can also mean “making the waters full of Light.”

In VII.1.8. the Rik says:

ā yaste agne idhate anikam vāsiṣṭha śukra didivah pāvakah.*

Sayana explains Vasishta as *śreṣṭha*⁶ the most prominent.

The word “Vasishta” occurs in I.112.9 *Vasiṣṭham yābhih ajarau ajinvatam*.⁷ In this hymn the Ashwins are supposed to please the Vasishtas. It seems that the reference here is hardly to an individual person—though the context justifies Sayana’s sense.

In X.95.17, the word “Vasishta” is used by Pururavas as referring to himself *Upa śikṣāmi urvaśim vasiṣṭhaḥ*.⁸ Sayana in the commentary says: *Vasiṣṭhaḥ samānānām madhye atiśayena vāsaiṣṭā*⁹ “Most shining among his equals”.

The entire VII Mandala belongs to Vasishta, and so we find large number of references indicating the person of that name. There too a Sukta brings

1 अदब्धव्रतप्रमतिः वशिष्ठः सहस्रं भरः शुचिजिह्वः अग्निः ।

2 सर्वस्य वासयिष्वित्तमः ।

3 अग्निर्वै देवानां वशिष्ठः ।

4 अपो वशिष्ठः सुक्रतुः ।

5 वसती वरीर्वशिष्ठः—आच्छादयति ।

* आ यः ते अग्ने इधते अनीकं वासिष्ठ शुक्र दीदिवः पावकः

6 श्रेष्ठः

7 वशिष्ठं याभिः अजरौ अजिन्वतम् ।

8 उपशिक्षामि उर्वशीम् वशिष्ठः

9 वशिष्ठः समानानां मध्ये अतिशयेन वासयिता.

out Vasishtha's individuality carrying the stamp of his inner experience, his knowledge and his innate Light. This in itself serves as a justification for the name

This Sukta, VII.33, does not establish Urvashi in the sense in which we find her in the Puranas. She is certainly an Apsara here by implication, a being of Light, of an order superior to humanity, capable of concealing her original form and assuming human body. She is not the heavenly nymph of the Court of Indra here.

Vasishtha is the man of knowledge, wise, having knowledge of the two worlds, thoroughly at home in the thousand-branched tree of Life, born from Light, capable of taking birth consciously and according to his will.

X.95. Colloquy of Pururavas and Urvashi.

There is no indication in the Riks except indirect hints about the person who is supposed to utter the hymns. Presumably, the first is by Pururavas, who is mentioned as *rājā* of her body (X.95.5). The second Rik is Urvashi's reply to him. The third may be ascribed to Pururavas. The fourth and the fifth are Urvashi's words. The sixth is Pururava's speech, while seventh may be by Urvashi or by any one else. The seventh, eighth and ninth are rather impersonal. The tenth seems to belong to Pururavas. The eleventh is Urvashi's reply. The twelfth again is Pururavas and thirteenth is Urvashi's. The fourteenth is by Pururavas. The fifteenth and sixteenth are Urvashi's words while seventeenth is spoken by Pururavas. The eighteenth is impersonal, though one may accept that it may have been spoken by Urvashi.

(Translation is given without the person)

1. O Spouse, stay by your mind, O cruel one; let us indeed mutually exchange words (for) these our thoughts unuttered make not for delight, nor in the more distant days give joy.¹

2. What shall we do with this speech? I have stepped beyond thee like

¹ ह ये, O; जाये spouse; मनसा, by the mind; तिष्ठ stay; घोरे, O' cruel one; वचांसि, words; मिश्रा, together; mutual; कृणवावहै, let us make; नु indeed; न, not; नौ, ours; मंत्रा, thoughts; अनुदितासः unuttered; ए ते, these; मयः delight; करन make; परतरे in the more distant; चन, delight; अहन, in the day:

the first of the Dawns, O Pururavas; return (once more) to thy dwelling. I am difficult to attain like the breeze.¹

3. The arrow of the quiver shoots not for victory (or glory), he who is impetuous does not (now) acquire cows or hundreds (of wealth), in the unheroic will there is no splendour; the great warriors—(they who shake the field)—are not conscious in their heart of the sorcery.²

Note: "Ranhi" is "running", "flowing," "hastening,"—indicates speed and eagerness. Sayana takes Māyu in the sense of सिंहनाद,—“the roaring of a lion,” or “battle cry.” But Monier Williams gives the sense of Māyu as “witchcraft”, black magic, “sorcery.” Dhunayah means “roars”, it means flowing noisily, boisterous.

What Pururavas wants to say is that his arrows no more fly and no more he acquires or cares for wealth. His will has become unheroic and so lost all its brightness. Even great warriors like him are not conscious of the sorcery Māyu that is working in their hearts.

4. She gives (holds) plenitude and delight to the father-in-law, O Dawn, if she (or he) desires from the neighbour (then), she pervades the house in which, being loved, she is pierced by the reed.³

¹ कि, what; एता, with this; वाचा, by words or speech; कृणवा, shall do; तव, thee; अहं, I; प्र, forward; or above; अक्रमिशंषं I have stepped; उषसाम्, of the Dawns; अग्न्या, foremost; इव, like.

² इषः arrow; न, not; श्रिये for the glory or victory; इषुधे, of the quiver; असना, for throwing; गोषा, न, acquiring cows; शतसाः acquiring a hundred; न, not; रंहि, one who is impetuous; अवीरे, in the unheroic; क्तौ in the will; वि, more, specially; दविद्यसत shone brightly, न, not; उरौ, in the heart; न, not; मायुं sorcery, witchcraft; चितयंत they know; धुनयः they who make tremble.

³ सा, she; वसु, plenitude; दधती, gives, or holds; इवशुराय, to the father-in-law; वयः, enjoyment, or substance; उषः O' Dawn; यदि if, in case; वृष्टिन् desires; अंतिगृहात, from the neighbour; अस्तं, home; ननक्षे, pervades; यस्मिन् in which; चाकत्, being satisfied or being

Note: Father-in-law here refers to the birth of Pururavas in X.95.9. The real parents are the gods and goddesses who came together at the time when Pururavas was being born. Urvashi, the power of Light, holds the plenitudes for the God who gave birth to Pururavas "for great delight" and "for killing the Dasyus." महे रणाय...दस्युहत्याय देवा (अवर्धयन्) X.95.17.

चाकन्, from कन्,—to be satisfied. To accept with satisfaction.

5. Thrice in the day didst thou strike me with the reed, and also thou hast filled me, undesiring intercourse; O Pururavas, following thy will have I come; O hero, thou wert that king of my body.¹

6. She who is growing bright, in a series, she joined (to me) in happy affection, she who is mirrored(as) in a lake* all stung together used to move;—they (now), brilliant rosy, anointed, move not, nor do they cry for union like the cows that have become nourishing ones.² **

Note: This Rik describes the various aspects of Urvashi as seen and experienced by Pururavas. They have all now ceased to visit him says Pururavas. The word श्रिये, 1. for joining, 2. for refuge and 3. for glory—all the three senses are possible.

pleased; दिवा during day; नक्तं, during night; श्रयिता, struck injured; वैतसेन, by the reed.

¹ त्रिः, thrice; स्म, in the past; अह् during the day; मा, mā me; श्रययः thou struck; वैतसेन, by the reed; उत, and, moreover; स्म, in the past; मे, me; अव्यत्य, undesiring intercourse; पृगासि, thou fillest; केतम् can mean desire; will, intention even intuition. It can be derived from Chit: to be conscious.

² या, she who; सुजूर्णि, glowing bright; श्रेणि, in a series; सुम्ने अपि, who is united in happy mind; हृदेचक्षु, one mirrored in a lake; न, like; ग्रंथिनी, knot, tied together; चरण्युः, moving, disposed to move; ताः, they; अंजयः ointed; अरुणयः rosy "brilliant"; न, not; सस्युः, move; श्रिये, for glory, or for union; गावः, cows; न, like; धेनवः nourishing ones; अनवन्त, (they) bellowed, cried.

* She whose eyes are clear like the lake

** They bellow not for glory (union) like the nourishing cows.

7. When this (man) was taking birth with him were divine Powers (of Fire) and the Rivers, exulting in themselves that nourished him, because the gods wanted to nourish thee, O Pururavas, for the great delight and for killing the Dasyus.¹

Note: This Rik makes it clear that in the birth of Pururavas superhuman powers had taken part. It is to be noted that the first line is in the impersonal, the second line is addressed to Pururavas but the identity of one who utters this line is not clear. It may be Urvashi, it may be Indra or any other God. Tradition ascribes this to Urvashi. This Rik shows the connection between the gods, goddesses and humanity and also that in the human birth there can be a divine purpose. It is this very idea which is seen in the Gita in the Vishwarupa, the Vibhuti, and the Avatāra. Urvashi implies here perhaps that she was one of the divine powers that came to him at his birth, but as Pururavas did not fulfil the will of the Gods, to manifest "great delight" and "kill the Dasyus," she was compelled to leave him.

8. When these divine Powers have abandoned their garment and the human being by association (or union) stays near them, then they move away, out of fear of me, as if afraid of enjoyment, or like the horses touching (touched by) the chariots.²

¹ सं, *sam*, together with; अस्मिन्, in this; जायमाने, was taking birth; आसत्, came (together); म्नाः, Divine Powers or goddesses; उत्, and, moreover; ई, this; अवर्धम् nourished; नद्यः, Rivers; स्वगूती, self-exulting; महे, for great; यत्, for, because; त्वा, thee; पुरुरवः O' Pururavas; रणाय, for delight; अवर्धयन्, caused or wanted to nourish; दस्यहत्याय for killing the Dasyus, देवाः, the gods.

² or, afraid of the protector. भुज्यु Sayana explains in this rik as "female deer"!—But in I.112.6 the same भुज्यु—he explains as *sarvasya pālakam* ! Ordinarily, *bhujyu* means "wealthy" rich" i.e., like the wealthy who are afraid of others, but it is derived from the root *bhuj* to enjoy; *bhujyu*: enjoyment: सच्चा, in association, union, in the presence; यत्, when; आसु, these (goddesses); जहतीषु, abandoning; अत्कम्, garment; अमानुषीषु superhuman beings; मानुषः, human being; निसेवे, dwells near; अप, away (moving); स्म, in the

Note: The last simile is that of horses who are afraid of the touch of chariot when they are being yoked for the first time. They generally want to run away from the yoke of the chariot. The goddesses also do not want to be yoked to human enjoyment and human responsibilities. They come to carry out some purpose of their own, or of the gods.

9. When these immortal Powers the mortal fondles (touches) and does not contact them through two kinds of people—inhabitants of heaven and those of earth,—and by acts of will, then they like aquatic birds reveal not their own bodies, (but act) like horses repeatedly biting in sport.¹

10. She (who) like lightning shone while descending, who fulfilled my changing objects of desires, a well-born active fighter to whom is born—may, Urvashi, attain long life (on earth).²

Note: The significance of this Rik bears relation to that of the previous one in which it is stated that the goddesses and other divine Powers conceal their forms from man. Pururavas seems to convey that Urvashi was not unrevealed to him. She descended shining brightly and did fulfil his many desires and even bore him a son. He expects her to live long with him. That this is the import is borne out by the Rik that follows.

past; मत्, from me; तरसंती, fearing, afraid; न, as if; भुज्यः, of enjoyment ताः, they; अत्रसन्, being afraid; रथस्पृशा, touching the chariot; न, like, as if; अश्वाः, horses.

¹ यत्, when; आसु, these Powers; अमृतासु Immortal; निस्पृक्, fondles; सं, together; क्षोणिनिः, by the two kinds of peoples—of heaven and of earth; क्रतुभिः, by wills, (Sayana renders “by sacrifices”) न, not; (सं) पुंक्ते, contacts, touches; ताः, they; आतयः, aquatic birds; न, not तन्वः, bodies; शुभत, reveal, manifest; स्वाः, their own; अश्वासः, horses; न, *na* like; क्रीळयः, in sport; दंदशानाः, frequently biting.

² विद्युत्, lightning; न, like; या, she, who; पतंती, descending; दविद्योत्, shone; भरंती, fulfilling; मे, my; अप्या, floating or desirable; काम्यानि, objects of desire; जनिष्ट, is born,—who gave birth to; अपः, active; नर्यः, fighter; सुजातः, well-born; उर्वशी, Urvashi; प्रतिरत, cross, may she attain; दीर्घ, long; आयुः, life.

URVASHI IN THE RIG VEDA

11. It is true, indeed, that thou hast begotten (a son) for the protection of the earth, O Pururavas, thou didst place in me that power; I, knowing, did instruct (or correct) thee all the days, (but) thou didst not at all listen to me. Why do you speak like one who has not experienced (or, enjoyed)?¹

12. When would the son born, knowing, desire the father, not shedding tears? Who would separate a couple of one mind, now that the fire shines in the fathers-in-law?²

Note: Here the meaning becomes complicated because of the mixture of images. It is even possible to take this rik in the following sense. Pururavas learns from Urvashi that she would not stay. Pururavas in dejection asks: Would the son want to see the Father, without shedding tears? This can be taken in this sense also. Has ever a son, born,—desired to see his father without tears? Pururavas hints that no son wants to see his father—and so I also would not without tears want to see my father,—the Fire. Even if a son was born who might protect the earth, why should a couple, like Pururavas and Urvashi,

¹ जसिषे, thou hast begotten; इत्या, indeed, certainly; गोपीथाय, for the protection of the earth; हि, only, certainly; दधाथ, thou didst place; तत्, that; पुरुरव—O' Pururavas; मे, in me; ओजः, force, or Power; अशासम्, I did instruct; त्वा, thee; विदुषी, knowing; सस्मिन्, in all; अहन्, in the days; न, not; मे, me or mine; आ, in any way; अश्रुणोः, didst hear; किम्, why; अभुक्, one who has not enjoyed; वदासि, speakest.

Sayana takes abhuk अभुक्—in the sense of one who has not kept his word. "O thou who hast not kept thy promise, why do you speak?" But we have in no Rik seen that Pururavas was asked to give such a promise.

² कदा, when; सूनुः, son; पितरं, father; जात, born; इच्छात्, would desire; चक्रन्, making; न, not; अश्रु, tears; वर्तयन्, roll down, or shedding; विजानन्, knowing, (or having the knowledge); कः, who; दंपती, pair, a couple; समनमा, of one mind; वियूयोत्, would separate; अध, now; यत्, that; अग्निः, Fire; श्रुमुरेषु, in the fathers-in-law; दीदयत्, shines, gives light.

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completely united in mind, separate because of him? This is not therefore necessary, especially in the light of the fact that Fire shines in so many parents,—in so many men (who have this Fire).

13. Thee I answer, thee that sheddest forth tears; weep not for the Good (that is) prayed for* 1; I send thee that which is thine in us (me); return to thy dwelling, O Ignorant one, you will not attain to me (have me).¹

Note: Urvashi says to Pururavas here that he should not be sorry for the good that he himself had intended—the fact of having a son. She in fact says she has given him back in the form of the son that which was his. As to winning Urvashi, she says that he had failed.

14. A real God now should descend, who would not return (to heaven), to reach that Beyond, the Supreme; or, let him (Pururavas) lie in the lap of dissolution, or may the fierce wolves devour him.²

Note: Pururavas here speaks out two or three alternatives in case Urvashi is not attained or reached by him on earth. If a God, a divine Being, descends on earth in order to make possible the march of man to the divine goal, to the Beyond and not return to Heaven, then man can attain Urvashi in the Supreme plane of consciousness. Or, the human being should lie subject to the determinism of Nature and remain mortal, or he may even be devoured by hostile forces that are antidivine, the wolves that tear the pilgrim on the Path.

¹ प्रति, counter, in answer; ब्रवाणि, I speak; वर्तयते, rolling; अश्रु, tears; चक्रम्, making; न,—not; कथ्यत्, weep; आध्ये, thought, meditated upon; शिवायै, for the good; प्र, forth; तत्, that; ते, to thee; हितवः, I send; यत्, that which; ते, thine; अस्मे, in us (i.e., me); परा, return; इहि, go; अस्तं, home; नहि, not; मूर्, ignorant; आपः, will attain.

² सुदेवः, a real god, or beautiful god; अद्य, now; प्रपतेत्, should descend; अनावृत्, “not returning”; परावर्त्तं, to the Beyond; परमां, to the Supreme; गंतवै, for going; ऊम्, there; अध, or; शयीत्, may he lie; निःकृतेः, of the dissolution; उपस्थे, in the lap; अध, or; एनं, him (this one); वृथाः, wolves; रभसासः, fierce; अद्युः, may devour.

*the good that is meditated upon.

URVASHI IN THE RIG VEDA

15. O Pururavas, do not kill yourself, do not fall, let not the harmful wolves devour thee; there are, indeed, no feminine friendships,—their hearts are like those of the house-wolves.¹

Note: In this Rik there is a general principle indicated in the form of unreliability of feminine friendships. So, Pururavas is asked to regard this as an instance not of partnership with a heavenly being but a human relation. Having not been able to keep up the higher relation with the heavenly being he is asked to look at it as an ordinary human relation in which there is always an element of impermanence and even fickleness.

The Rik that follows, is spoken by Urvashi:

16. When having changed my form, I moved among mortals and lived (among them) four seasons of winter-nights, what I enjoyed was only a spark of Illumination*, once a day,—gratified even by that little (mite) here, I depart.²

Note: Urvashi, an immortal Goddess, here speaks about her experience among mortals during her sojourn on earth. It shows the great value which later Indian tradition came to attach to human birth. She confesses that she had only a spark of Illumination in her daily so called humdrum life; but it was worth it. She is satisfied with it. There is enough recompense even in ignorance and mortality of man to induce even divine beings to participate in his life.

¹ पुरुरवः, O Pururavas; मा, not; मृथाः, thou die (may); मा, not; तप्तः, all; मा, not; त्वा, thee; वृकासः, wolves; अशिवासः, injurious; उ, even; क्षन्, devour; न, not; वै, indeed; स्त्रैणानि, feminine; सख्यानि, friendships; संति, are there; सालावृकाणां, of the, house-wolves; हृदयानि, hearts; एता, these:

² यत्, when; विरूपा, have changed form; अचरं, moved; मर्त्येषु, among mortals; अवसं, I stayed; रात्री, nights; शरदः, of winter; चतस्रः, four; तस्य, of the Illumination; स्तोकम्, little (drop of spark); सकृत्, once;

ह्यहः, in the day; आश्र्वां, enjoyed; तात्, from that; एव, even; इदं, here; तातृपाणा, gratified; चरामि, I depart (move);

* or, "I ate only a drop of clarified butter everyday".

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17. I, foremost among those that shine, would master Urvashi, travelling through mid-regions, she who measures the Rajas; may one generous of good-deeds stay near thee, return (for) my heart is being consumed.¹

Note: This is evidently spoken by Pururavas. He resolves to master Urvashi and pleads that he should be near her, particularly because his heart is afflicted. It is a high human resolve with human demands mixed up with it. The reply in the 18th, the last Rik, seems impersonal.

18. O Son of Ila, these gods have spoken to thee thus: "this, thou hast become a kinsman to Death; thy progeny will sacrifice to the gods by offering, (and) thou too, verily, will enjoy delight in that Heaven."²

Note: The gods at last seem to decide that Pururavas has become a kinsman to Death and so he can have the wide delight in heaven (not on earth); his children may continue the effort of retaining the contact of the gods by the sacrifice.

It is clear that Urvashi, Vasishta and Pururavas are not yet definitely crystallised into human personalities. The origin and etymology of the words shows "Urvashi" as "wideness of Light and of Delight", Vasishta as the condition of being "most full of Light or knowledge" and Pururavas, the son of man, as "the many voiced human being crying aloud for satisfying his desires." Pururavas is spoken of in these hymns only once as Raja—a King, and there it is Urvashi who says "King of my body."

Vasishta, the most shining seer, who had the mystic knowledge of the two worlds and knew the secret of this thousand-branched tree of life, wished to

¹ अंतरिक्षप्रां, travelling through mid-regions; रजसः, of the Rajas; विमानीम्, one who measures; उपगिक्षामि, I would master; उर्वशीम्, Urvashi; वसिष्ठः, Vasishtah, most full of light; उप, near; त्वा, thee; दाति, giver; सुकृतस्य, of good deeds; तिष्ठात्, stay; (may); निवर्तस्व, return; हृदयं, heart; तप्यते, to be consumed; मे, my.

² इति, thus, this; त्वा, thee; देवाः, gods; इमे, these; आहुः, have spoken; ऐळ, O son of Ila; यथा, that; इ, this; एतत्, this, thou; भवसि, thou becomest; मृत्युबंधुः, a kinsman of Death; प्रजा, progeny; ते, thou; देवान्, to the gods; हविषा, by the offerings; यजाति, will sacrifice; स्वर्गे, in heaven; ऊं, that; त्वम्, thou; अपि, even; मादयासे, will enjoy

URVASHI IN THE RIG VEDA

attain a higher than human birth. He wanted to be born in the Apsaras. Mitra and Varuna saw him born, he became the Manasaputra—the mental or subtle progeny of Urvashi, the Apsara. This part shows also the ancient truth behind the belief in several “births” of man. Physical birth is the first, common and animal birth. The second birth is a soul-birth. Then is the man called Dwija—twice born.

Urvashi in this Sukta is a shining heavenly being full of intense Light.

In the colloquy of Pururavas and Urvashi there is open mention of Urvashi leaving Pururavas, and the latter insisting on her remaining with him. She complains of being subjected to human impulses though she implies that she came among the mortals, and particularly to Pururavas, because the goddesses and gods wanted him to be nourished so as to secure through him the destruction of the Dasyus, the anti-divine powers and the creation of great Delight, Urvashi came down following Pururavas' will to make possible the creation of this great Delight. We must note that this “great Delight” is something different from the ordinary human pleasure.

But Pururavas evidently seems to have failed to notice the higher origin of Urvashi who had taken up the human form leaving aside her original divine one. He does not realise that these divine powers do not relish gross human pleasures, they fight shy of them. The 9th rik lays down that the proper way of contacting these divine powers is by sacrifice and mutual conscious interchange between the human and the divine. The divine Powers do not reveal their bodies to the ordinary consciousness of man.

Pururavas tries to argue that Urvashi had revealed her form to him and even given him a son. Urvashi makes a very emphatic reply pointing out that the Son would carry out the original purpose of the gods by protecting the earth from the Dasyus. As for the rest she accuses him of not listening to her instructions. She persuades him to accept her decision of departure by saying that she had given back to him what he had given her—in the form of the son. As for winning her he had entirely failed. Pururavas then is dejected and Urvashi tries to soothe him by charging all women with fickleness. She even expresses what great satisfaction she derived by the spark of Illumination in her daily life among the mortals. The conditions of retaining Urvashi are not known to Pururavas. Human feelings, cravings and even emotional suffering would not secure Urvashi or the mortal. The condition hinted in the last Rik is that Pururavas should cease to be subject to mortal consciousness. So long as he is in that ignorant condition he can only have joy in heaven after leaving the body. If a man can outgrow his mortal consciousness and cease to be a “kinsman of Death” then he

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can retain Urvashi with her, wide immortal delight. The relation of mortal consciousness with this wide, immortal Bliss can only be temporary. Man cannot expect the divine Bliss to compromise with the baser elements of human nature. He has to rise to the height of the higher, divine Bliss by purifying his nature; then only can he expect the Divine Bliss, and infinite Light, Urvashi,—to descend and stay with the mortal. The conditions of success in this are that the gods and goddesses that are born with the mortals should dominate the life of the human being. In many places the Veda speaks of the Divine Births—births of the gods in man, e.g., ‘Ayam evaya janmane’ stomo akari’. This colloquy illustrates the vedic truth of the birth of the gods in man and man’s need of transforming his nature by his own aspiration and by the help of the divine beings. Then would human life manifest its highest possibility, a divine perfection. The Vedic age found it not possible to bring about such a change. For it, the human remains the kinsman of Death. It may be that the ages that have followed may find it possible to bring about such a consummation.

A. B. PURANI

REVIEW

Famous Tales of India by A. S. P. Ayyar, M.A., I.C.S. Published by V. Ramaswamy Sastralu & Sons, Madras 1. Price Rs. 4/- only.

"India is the cradle land of fable, allegory, parable and story. Nowhere in the ancient world did these forms of art flourish in such luxuriance and variety as in the land between the Himalayas and the sea. In verse and prose, and in mixed verse and prose, the great Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Tamil authors narrated many a story of surpassing wisdom, sublime import and deep insight into human nature." With these words the author has introduced the following eleven famous tales of India: 1. Human Sacrifice Stopped. 2. Nala and Damayanti. 3. Savitri. 4. Harischandra 5. Vikrama and Urvashi 6. Sakuntala 7. Udayana Vatsaraja. 8. Mahavira. 9. Bimbisara; 10. Kovalan and Kannaki 11. Manimekalai. Most of these tales are household stories in India, but the author has narrated them in a manner which creates fresh interest. The book is primarily intended for foreigners who will get from it a glimpse of the heart of India as representing humanity at its best. They make men near to gods and gods near to men and it is this aspect of Indian idealism which most impresses foreign savants. Thus the famous Irish poet and critic A.E. (Russel) told the author how he was thrilled by the story of Damayanti: "Oh, the unforgettable scene when at her bidding the immortals sat there shadowless, with unwinking eyes and unfaded garlands, with their feet not touching the earth, and with no trace of perspiration on their foreheads." Goethe, the greatest German poet said about Sankuntala:

"Would'st thou the young year's blossom and the fruits of its decline,
And all by which the soul is charmed, enraptured, feasted, fed,
Would'st thou the earth and heaven itself in one sole word combine.
I name thee, O Sakuntala, and all at once is said."

The most important tale however is that of Mahavira, the founder of Jainism. The author has taken great pains to make it authentic and to give

a clear view of what Jainism stands for. Though at one time both Buddhism and Jainism played a great role in shaping the spiritual life of India and their contribution has been deep and lasting, Buddhism has now been practically banished from India, and the Jains are few in number, considering the vast population of India. Very few people in India know what Jainism is, it is not regarded as a part of Hinduism. So the author has rendered a great service by showing that Jainism is not at all alien to Hinduism but that all the great spiritual ideas and ideals preached by the Jains are familiar to the Hindus and are indeed integral parts of their own spiritual culture. But the author has his own reasons for selecting Mahavira for his anthology. He says: "Mahavira's life is of singular beauty and is of the greatest significance to the world. It often reminds us of the life of the modern Apostle of Non-Violence, Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, who was deeply attracted by Jainism and was sometimes even mistaken for a Jain, though really a Vaishnavite Hindu." But in spite of the great efforts made by Gandhiji, the modern man does not find much beauty in the figure of a naked ascetic who deliberately keeps his body dirty and full of lice as Mahavira did. Indeed even men of that time used to abuse him, throw stones at him and even thrash him mercilessly. The patience with which he bore all this showed the greatness of his soul, but there is no reason why a man should deliberately look ugly in order to be a spiritual man. Beauty is a divine attribute, beauty not only of the mind and soul but also of the body and the external behaviour. The author has chosen the life story of Mahavira because he was an apostle of non-violence, and the world now needs non-violence more than anything else. But the non-violence of Mahavira came from his deep spiritual realisation which we cannot expect of ordinary men; it is no use talking of non-violence unless the mind and heart of men are ready for it; by mental will men can suppress violence, but that does not remove it and it can burst out at any moment gathering tremendous force by that very act of suppression. That is what has actually happened in India by the long preaching of non-violence by Mahatma Gandhi. During his last days he had to see so much violence in India as was never before experienced in history, and he himself had a violent ending, an apostle of non-violence though he was. Indeed he himself had lost faith in non-violence as was seen in the permission he gave to sabotage in the 1942 movement and his approval of the military action in Hyderabad and Kashmir. Mahavira did not prescribe non-violence as a method of political and economic fight as Gandhiji did, he prescribed it as a means of attaining

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salvation. He as well as Buddha, the other great apostle of non-violence, recognised that there are cases in life when for the worldly man violence and war becomes a duty. Mahavira said: "Observe *Brahmacharya* and do not hanker after women or wealth. Then alone can you follow Truth and Non-violence and attain salvation." We cannot expect this of ordinary men and the masses, thus mass satyagraha is a falsification of the great ideal of non-violence and it cannot be utilised for solving our political or economic problems.

What then is the value of the lives of great souls like Mahavira for the modern age? They emphasise the fact that true spirituality does not consist in blindly following the Shastras and conventionally performing religious rites and ceremonies; it consists in turning inward and finding our true self which is not the body, the mind or the ego. This self-realisation is termed *Nirvana* or liberation and it is essentially the teaching of the Vedas and the Upanishads as well as that of Buddha. *Nirvana* is really the extinction not of existence but of our ignorance which binds us to the material life full of sufferings. As the people were misunderstanding and misapplying the teachings of the Vedas, both Buddha and Mahavira denounced the Vedas and asked people to depend on their own efforts following the teachings of a spiritually realised personality. In a sense all great spiritual teachers are rebels, they stand against the corruptions of their age which people take as the true dharma. But if we take the true sense of their teachings we find they were not at all against the Vedas, they represented one important aspect of the *sanatana dharma*. The real significance of the advent of Mahavira is well indicated in the conversation he had with his elder brother when he expressed his desire to become a world-shunning ascetic. His brother was most unwilling and said, "Brother, why not live in the world and yet not be of it? Great ones have declared this to be possible. After all, the four Purusharthas are *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. Wealth and love can be indulged in so far as they are not inconsistent with righteousness or salvation." "Never can salvation be achieved so long as one has got the least attachment to *Artha* and *Kama*," said Vardhamana (the former name of Mahavira). "To try to belong to both the worlds is like having one leg in heaven and one leg on the earth." Here we find an opposition made between heaven and earth, between spiritual life and worldly life which is contrary to the Vedic ideal. This disdaining of earthly life is foreign to the spirit of the Vedas. "I am a son of Earth, the soil is my mother," says the Rishi in Atharva Veda (XII.1.12,44,56). "May Earth,

sovereign over the past and the future, make for us a wide world.”(Ib). “I purify earth and heaven by the Truth.”—Rig Veda 1.133.1. Moksha or spiritual realisation was held as the ultimate aim of human life, but well-regulated satisfaction of desire (*kama*) and enjoyment of pleasure (*artha*) was regarded as a preparation for that. This integral ideal gave full scope to the development of worldly life and following this scheme India once rose to great heights in all departments of creative activity. It was men like Buddha and Mahavira who disturbed this ancient harmony of Indian culture by denouncing worldly life and *arthakaman* altogether. But this was an inevitable development. The pull towards the lower life of the senses made men forget altogether the spiritual aim of life, *dharma* faded and declined and men began to live almost on the level of animals. It was as a reaction against this that Buddhism and Jainism came to the rescue of Indian spirituality. To correct one extreme it was necessary to go to the other extreme. Asceticism is a great ideal, it means mastery over the lower nature and without this no spiritual life is possible. But true asceticism does not consist in external renunciation, it means inner control and freedom from all attachment. “When all the desires that cling to the heart are loosed away from it, then the mortal becomes immortal, even here he possesses the Eternal.”—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad IV.4.7. In order to arrive at this inner control one need not run away from life. In order to conquer fear we need not go to live in jungles infested with tigers and cobras; life offers us plenty of dangerous situations where we can practise courage. We shall never conquer lust by running away from women. After full self-control is achieved, there is no necessity of running away from the world and from its beauty, love and joy. As the Gita says: “It is by ranging over the objects with the senses, but with senses subject to the self, freed from liking and disliking, that one gets into a large and sweet clearness of soul and temperament in which passion and grief find no place, the intelligence of such a man is rapidly established (in its proper seat). —Gita, 2/64,65. It is this integral ideal of a full worldly life based on spiritual self-knowledge that is to be held before the modern world and not the negative ideals of Buddha or Mahavira. Renunciation is not the aim but the means of arriving at spiritual life, and inner renunciation is sufficient for that. But as in individuals, there may at a certain stage be the necessity of practising outer renunciation also when the desires and attachments are too strong for the inner practice, so also in the history of the race there comes a time when the imperfection of the present life of man

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has to be emphasised so that man may turn towards the spiritual quest, and that great purpose has been served by the *sannyasins* in India. But now the time has come to return to the integral Vedic ideal, and the lines of this have been well laid in the Gita. Whatever be the historical date of the composition of the Gita in its present form, it comes logically after Buddha and Mahavira. It contains all the essential teachings of the latter, often using their language and terminology, but it reconciles them with the teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads and holds up the Vedic ideal of a divine life on the earth in a new light. But before the teachings of the Gita could mould the lives of the Indians, Shankara revived the negative ideals of Buddha and Mahavira and as he supported this by interpreting the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and even the Gita in his own way, the Vedic harmony has not yet been recovered. To accomplish this great task has been the life work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

A. B.

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